





The  
STYLISTIC DEVELOPMENT  
of KEATS

BY

WALTER JACKSON BATE

*Member of the Society of Fellows,  
Harvard University*

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*To*  
DOUGLAS BUSH

## INTRODUCTORY NOTE

THIS STUDY is twofold in its purpose: it seeks to give a precise description of the unfolding and development of a great poet's stylistic craftsmanship, and it also attempts to ally this technical progression with the changing bents of mind which gave it rise and direction.

In accordance with these aims, the metrical sections of this analysis are written with the hope of throwing additional light upon Keats's general stylistic development rather than of making any specific contribution to the science of English metrics *per se*. Since the time when the followers of Joshua Steele's *Prosodia Rationalis* (1779)—Thelwall and Odell, Richard Roe and James Chapman—established the "bar-and-rest school" of English metrists, prosodists have occasionally abandoned traditional modes of scansion and employed their own means of dividing the line. It is certainly true that recent attempts of this sort are hardly to be classed, for example, with Steele's division of the first line of *Paradise Lost* into

Of / man's / first diso / bedience / and the / fruit;

and there is ground for the contention that the metrical subtleties which ordinarily elude orthodox designation can be more precisely expressed, if not so easily grasped, by a language constructed for the occasion. But the aims of this study, and the belief that criticism has little justification unless it is cast in a form which can readily communicate, have necessitated a more traditional approach, and also, I may add, a certain amount of general repetition. I have assumed the existence of metrical feet; patterns of versification have been considered almost wholly on that assumption, with the belief that, where conscious, they were treated in this way by Keats; and an attempt has been made to employ, wherever possible, the most customary terminology. I should add that, in accordance with the practice of some of the older prosodists, I have simply used the sign (˘) to indicate a syllable which is not completely unstressed but

which does not deserve more than an intermediate accent at most.

Some statement should also be made about the statistical material which is occasionally presented throughout this study. Except when there is a specific statement to the contrary, the present writer is responsible for it. Any such material is always open to the charge that some instances counted under a certain heading are disputable;<sup>1</sup> that the compilation of frequency, in other words, is somewhat dependent on the compiler's judgment. A true pyrrhic foot, for example, may be very rare indeed; for one of the syllables in a so-called pyrrhic may almost always be pronounced with slightly more stress than the other. Again, what strictly constitutes hovering accent or a spondaic foot is often a matter of caprice. But although the compilation of another analyst might differ somewhat, it is improbable that the difference would be sufficiently marked to alter the conclusions. It is possible that the significance of some of the statistical material could be questioned on another, if slighter, ground. Statistics are, of course, a complicated matter, and it is entirely possible that simple percentages indicating frequency of occurrence are not completely conclusive. Without pleading how rarely one may find a statistician who is also interested in English verse, I would strongly emphasize that this material is included simply for what it is worth and left to the judgment of the reader. Many students have often wished, in reading metrical or even stylistic works, that they know more exactly how common a particular phenomenon was. With the belief that statistical notes are at least more helpful than general statements, such notes have been included for readers who may have this desire.

A final word of caution seems advisable. A conscious purpose, in a general form, may have been undeniably present in the mind of a writer studied; but stylistic and especially prosodic studies must appear, by their very nature, to attribute to him a more analytically conscious intention in specific instances than there is warrant for assuming. An attempt has been made in

<sup>1</sup> Particularly disputable would be the placing of the *cæsura*. In any relatively long passage of English pentameter verse, from a sixth to a quarter of the lines contain so slight a pause as to raise the question whether a *cæsura* exists at all. In the analyses of *cæsural* placing, however, for the practical purposes of this study, I have included all lines, however slight the pause.

this book to guard against too flagrant an appearance of this sort; but it may be re-emphasized here that many of the phenomena analyzed are offered less as specific ends towards which Keats was striving than as instances symptomatic of a more general purpose.

Throughout this study, continual reference has been made to the large body of earlier English prosodic writing, particularly that produced immediately before and during Keats's lifetime. It is believed that such reference is fruitful; for this sort of writing is often of considerable assistance in attempting to place the precise stylistic nature of the verse of a specific period. That later stylistic studies have not received anything like proportionate reference does not, therefore, imply that I am not under obligation to them. Like anyone who deals with versification, I owe a general debt to the pioneer works of Schipper, Sidney Lanier, Bridges, Mayor, Omond, and Saintsbury; and to the more recent writings of Messrs. Robert Hillyer, Pallister Barkas, P. F. Baum, J. E. Bernard, Egerton Smith, John Pope, H. C. Wyld, and Sir George Young. Among works closer to the subject of this analysis I have an equal obligation, despite the dissimilarity of my approach, to Wolff's *Essay on Keats's Treatment of Heroic Rhythms and Blank Verse* (Paris, 1909), to Mr. H. W. Garrod's *Keats* (1926), to the excellent Harvard dissertation of Mr. N. S. Bushnell on the *Style of the Spenserian Stanzas, Sonnets, and Odes of Keats* (1928), to Mr. Ridley's *Keats' Craftsmanship* (1933), and to Mr. Zillman's recent edition of Keats's sonnets (Los Angeles, 1939). For my discussions of Keats's marginalia and manuscript revisions, I am indebted to the Harvard College Library, whose rich Keats Memorial Collection of books, manuscripts, and photostats centers in the Amy Lowell and the Houghton-Crewe libraries of Keatsiana. In instances where I have been unable to view the original manuscript or photostatic copies, I have relied on Mr. Garrod's textual edition of Keats (1939), which is also the edition used for citation.

My personal obligations have been many. Professors Cabell Greet of Columbia University and Albert H. Marckwardt of the University of Michigan have kindly helped me on some matters of phonetics. Professor Hyder E. Rollins, Mr. William A. Jackson, and Professor Frederick A. Pottle have been helpful with

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W. J. BATE

*Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1945*



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## THE APPRENTICESHIP

"So this Poem must rather be considered as an endeavour than a thing accomplish'd: a poor prologue to what, if I live, I humbly hope to do."

—From the rejected Preface to *Endymion*.

FEW POETS have elicited more analysis and discussion since the close of the last century than has Keats. His poetry, with the aid of his letters, has been studied from almost all angles; it has been re-interpreted biographically and philosophically, and has been placed more clearly in its contemporary setting. There has been no proportionate scrutiny, however, of the stylistic and especially the metrical excellence of Keats's verse, the peculiar course of its progress, the relation of its development to his own critical theories, and the exact character of the influence on it of other poets. It may be assumed that such a scrutiny would prove rewarding. For during the four or five years of his active writing career, Keats attained a mature and penetrating insight into the workings of his art which few poets have possessed, while at the same time he developed from a gifted but awkward apprentice to a poet of the most dexterous craftsmanship. The progress of both his stylistic craftsmanship and his critical awareness is closely interwoven, and, viewed together, they reveal the poetic mind at work in an illuminating manner.

The peculiar excellence of Keats—that quality with which he is most closely identified and which sets him apart from the majority of English poets—is the consummate stylistic manifestation, at once intense and restrained, of a passionate desire for absorption in what for him was poetical.) His conception of what was poetical underwent progressive change, but it was almost always directed to the specific and the concrete. Throughout *Endymion*, it is emphasized that the concrete must be accepted and cherished as the only means of knowing the ideal, while even as early as *Sleep and Poetry* there is an insistence

that the successive stages through which the poet must pass—from that of the “laughing school-boy, without grief or care,” through the “realm of Flora and old Pan,” to the final stage of full response to the pain and sorrow of human life—are stages in which the attention of the poet is focussed upon the particular: “The excellence of every art is its intensity, capable of making all disagreeables evaporate from their being in close relationship with Beauty and Truth.”<sup>1</sup> This “intensity” is the concentrated identity and individual meaning or truth of a particular.<sup>2</sup> As Keats wrote to Shelley, “A modern work, it is said, must have a purpose, which may be the God. An artist must serve Mammon. . . . You might curb your magnanimity, and be more of an artist, and load every rift of your subject with ore.”<sup>3</sup> It is by a concentration, not an expansion or abstraction, of the “intensity” imbedded within the particular that the poet simultaneously gratifies the imagination and the intellect with beauty and with truth.

A delight in the concrete and a confidence in its reality were deeply entrenched in Keats’s mind, and the most cursory examination of his manuscript revisions discloses his instinctive working towards concrete concentration. Thus, to take a few instances from the *Eve of St. Agnes*, an addition of specific detail marks the revision of

- A *drooping* lamp was flickering *here and there* (xl, 6)
- to
- A *chain-droop’d* lamp was flickering *by each door*,
- and of
- he scarce could brook
- Sighs*, at the thought of those enchantments cold,
- And Madeline asleep *among those* legends old (xv, 7-9)
- to
- he scarce could brook
- Tears*, at the thought of those enchantments cold,
- And Madeline asleep *in lap of* legends old.

<sup>1</sup> To George and Thomas Keats, December 21, 1817, *Letters*, ed. M. B. Forman (New York, 1935), p. 71. Subsequent references to Keats’s *Letters* are to this edition.

<sup>2</sup> For discussion of this in some detail, see the essay by the present writer on *Negative Capability: the Intuitive Approach in Keats* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1939), esp. pp. 47-78.

<sup>3</sup> August, 1820, *Letters*, p. 507.

The opening of the eighth stanza was originally written

She danc'd along with vague uneager look,  
Her anxious lips full pulped with rosy thoughts.

Keats crossed out "look" and substituted "eyes," and by degrees transformed the weak prettiness of the second line into something approaching "intensity": "Anxious her lips, her breathing quick and short." In the stanza about the feast, he first wrote

While he from forth the closet brought a heap  
Of candied sweets . . .

He perceived the lack of strength in "sweets," crossed it out, and put the more specific "fruits" above it. Even "fruits," however, was not sufficiently detailed, and so he enumerated individually

candied apple, quince, and plum, and gourd,  
And jellies soother than the dairy curd,  
And lucent syrups smooth with cinnamon.

"Dairy curd" became the more concrete "creamy curd," and "lucent syrups smooth with cinnamon" was strengthened by the substitution of "tinct" for "smooth."<sup>4</sup>

"Touch," wrote Keats, "has a memory";<sup>5</sup> and perhaps a part of this same instinctive working towards the tangible particular is Keats's tendency, in his maturer verse, to ally his other sensory images more closely with the sense of touch and consequently render them stronger and more concrete. Thus he revised

Uncclasps her bosom jewels, one by one (*St. Agnes*, xxvi, 3)

to read

Uncclasps her *warmèd* jewels one by one.

<sup>4</sup> Three similarly concrete revisions may be instanced from the manuscript of the ode *To Autumn*: "Who hath not seen thee? for thy haunts are many" was altered to "Who hath not seen thee oft amid thy store?" "Or sound sleep on a half reaped field" became "Or on a half-reap'd furrow sound asleep"; and "Spares for one slumbrous minute the next swath" was transformed to "Spares the next swath *and all its twined flowers*."

<sup>5</sup> *Lines to Fanny*, 4.

In the alteration of the line

Pale, lattic'd, high, and silent as a tomb (*ib.*, xiii, 5),

where an appeal is already made to the senses of sight and hearing, an epithet addressed to the sense of touch is added:

Pale, lattic'd, *chill*, and silent as a tomb.

Incense is made almost tangible by being called "soft" and pictured as *hanging*:

I cannot see what flowers are at my feet  
Nor what *soft incense hangs* upon the boughs (*Nightingale*, 41-42).

Or again, to take three similar instances from the *Fall of Hyperion*:

. . . the *touch*  
Of *scent* (I, 23-4).  
. . . the *moist scent* of flowers (I, 404).  
. . . the small warm rain  
Melts out the frozen *incense* from all flowers (I, 98-99).

It was this same devotion to the concrete particular which led Keats, as he grew older, to regard human life with a zest and a gusto reminiscent of Chaucer and of Shakespeare. In a letter written to his brother, Tom, during the Scottish tour, Keats describes an old peasant woman: "Squab and lean she sat and puff'd out the smoke while two ragged tattered Girls carried her along. *What a thing would be the history of her Life and sensations.*"<sup>6</sup> In his copy of Matheo Aleman's *The Rogue, or the Life of Guzman de Alfarache*, he underlined the words, "*His voice lowd and shrill but not very cleere,*" and enthusiastically wrote in the margin: "This puts me in mind of Fielding's Fanny 'whose teeth were white but uneven'; it is the same sort of personality. The great man in this way is Chaucer." "Scenery is fine," he wrote to Bailey, "but human nature is finer. The Sward is richer for the tread of a real, nervous, English foot."<sup>7</sup> "Wonders," he explained to his publisher, "are no wonders to me. I am more at home amongst Men and Women. I would

<sup>6</sup> July 3-9, 1818, *Letters*, p. 174.

<sup>7</sup> March 13, 1818, *ibid.*, p. 111.

rather read Chaucer than Aristotle."<sup>8</sup> In the letter to Woodhouse in which he stressed the negative quality of the poet's own identity and the ability of the poet to enter, by an imaginative intuition, into the "identities" of the concrete particulars about him—the identities of the "Sun, the Moon, the Sea and Men and Women"—Keats added:

When I am in a room with People if ever I am free from speculating on creations of my own brain, then not myself goes home to my self: but the identity of every one in the room begins to press upon me [so] that I am in a very little time annihilated—not only among Men; it would be the same in a Nursery of children.<sup>9</sup>

"Nothing seemed to escape him," wrote Severn, who often accompanied Keats on his walks:

. . . Even the features and gestures of passing tramps, the colour of one woman's hair, the smile on one child's face, the furtive animalism below the deceptive humanity in many of the vagrants, even the hats, clothes, shoes, wherever these conveyed the *remotest hint as to the real self of the wearer*.<sup>10</sup>

In the chapter on *Lear* in his copy of Hazlitt's *Characters of Shakespear's Plays*, he both sidemarked and underlined a passage which, he wrote in the margin, "has to a great degree the hieroglyphic visioning":

We see the ebb and flow of the feeling, its pauses and feverish starts, its impatience of opposition, its accumulating force when it has time to recollect itself, *the manner in which it avails itself of every passing word or gesture, its haste to repel insinuation, the alternate contraction and dilatation of the soul*.<sup>11</sup>

It was precisely this "ebb and flow of the feeling," this "alternate contraction and dilatation of the soul," this "same animal eagerness"—as Keats wrote in a letter to his brother—that underlies the "alertness of a Stoat or the anxiety of a Deer" (an "instinctiveness" which is "the very thing in which consists

<sup>8</sup> November 17, 1819, *ibid.*, pp. 439-440.

<sup>9</sup> October 27, 1818, *ibid.*, p. 228.

<sup>10</sup> William Sharp, *Life and Letters of Joseph Severn* (1892), p. 20.

<sup>11</sup> Printed for R. Hunter and C. and J. Ollier (London, 1817)—now in the Harvard Keats Memorial Collection—p. 157.

poetry"),<sup>12</sup> momentarily glimpsed, for example, in the old peasant woman met during the Scottish tour, in the "smile on one child's face," in the "furtive animalism" in the faces of the passing vagrants: it was this hidden intention and movement which Keats called the "electric fire,"<sup>13</sup> equally at work within an Iago or an Imogen,<sup>14</sup> in a sparrow or even a billiard-ball,<sup>15</sup> which gives every object and every creature its peculiar individuality and meaning, and which can be grasped only by an intuitive fellow-feeling on the part of the poet—this was for Keats both Beauty and Truth and, as he insisted,

is all  
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.

This "intensity" which Keats sought to detect and express was imprisoned within the concrete, and the concrete was a part of its nature and its truth. Whether his attention was directed to the beauty and significance of the tangible, inanimate world or to the specific natures of the human beings about him, that which held his fascination, which demanded the "annihilation" of his own identity, and which was indeed the very stuff of

<sup>12</sup> February 14–May 3, 1819, *Letters*, p. 317.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 316.

<sup>14</sup> To Woodhouse, October 27, 1818, *ibid.*, p. 228.

<sup>15</sup> "If a sparrow comes before my Window I take part in its existence and pick about the Gravel" (to Bailey, November 22, 1817, *ibid.*, p. 69). Cf. the lines in "The Poet":

'Tis the man who with a bird,  
Wren or Eagle, finds his way to  
All its instincts (8–10).

It is Woodhouse's *Scrap-Book* (now in the Morgan Library) which is responsible for the unusual and interesting story that Keats "affirmed that he can conceive of a billiard-Ball that it may have a sense of delight from its own roundness, smoothness & volubility & the rapidity of its motion." Keats (Oct. 27, 1818) had explained to Woodhouse his theory of "negative capability." Woodhouse is here commenting on Keats's letter, and adds: "I believe him to be right with regards to his own Poetical Character—And I perceive clearly the distinction he draws between himself & those of the Wordsworth School . . . The highest order of Poet . . . will have so high an imag<sup>e</sup> that he will be able to throw his own soul into any object he sees or imagines, so as to see feel be sensible of & express all that the object itself wo<sup>d</sup> see feel be sensible of or express. He will speak out of that object so that his own self will with the Exception of the mechanical part be 'annihilated.'—and it is the excess of this power that I suppose K to speak, when he says he has no identity. As a poet, and when the fit is upon him, it is true. . . . Let us pursue Speculation on these Matters: & we shall soon be bro<sup>d</sup> to believe in the truth of every syllable of Keats's letter, taken as a description of himself & his own ideas and feels."

poetry and of truth for him was the distinctive meaning and individuality of the particular. From his craving for absorption in what varyingly constituted for him the poetical, but which was almost always the specific and concrete, arise the entire temper of his maturer verse and particularly his effort to secure the utmost tangible completeness of expression. It is hardly an exaggeration, indeed, to contend that it was this same desire for completeness which gave impetus and direction not only to an impassioned though disciplined intensity of epithet and image, but also to his faculty, as his craftsmanship developed, for drawing with increasing skill upon whatever phonetic, metrical, and general stylistic devices might simultaneously weight the richness and strengthen the texture of his lines.

It is the elucidation of the nature of this stylistic achievement which is the primary concern of this analysis. Attention must first be given, however, to that initial period of his writing when Keats, after composing a few lyrics in the conventional style of the century before, adopted numerous metrical and stylistic devices for securing a combined luxury and freedom—a combination he associated, at least in his early practice, with the intense and weighted expression which was a conscious goal in all his verse. The technical character of his early writing has perhaps little intrinsic interest. Despite the rapidity with which his critical insight matured, Keats's stylistic advance was by no means an immediate one. Until after the composition of *Isabella*, he did not often rise above eclectic imitation, laxity, and occasionally fitful and perhaps misguided attempts to attain discipline and restraint. Yet there is ample warrant for the *disjecta membra* which strew the opening pages of this study. For analysis of Keats's stylistic progress before he wrote *Hyperion* discloses indications which, in their broad outline, sketch a consistent and distinctive development. It also helps to reveal, perhaps even more than the delineation of phrasal borrowing, the extent to which this gifted apprentice was indebted to various predecessors in English poetry, and the manner in which he sought and adapted from them stylistic devices to fit his immediate purpose.



## I

## THE EARLY SONNETS

A large portion of the verse which Keats read, first at the school in Enfield with Charles Cowden Clarke and especially later with George Felton Mathew, to whom he addressed his first poetic epistle, was composed of the sonnets, odes, elegiac quatrains, and Spenserian stanzas of the century before; and the somewhat pale shadow of this reading is strongly apparent over much of the verse he wrote before the close of 1815. The kinship of this verse, in imagery and general temper, with eighteenth-century non-couplet verse has often been noticed. Like that of Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Byron, however, the earliest extant verse of Keats is perhaps even more closely allied with the eighteenth century in versification than in diction, image, and sentiment.<sup>1</sup> But Keats quickly rejected eighteenth-century convention, and his rejection of it in the lyrical form was curiously feverish and many-sided. "The imagination of a boy is healthy," he wrote in the Preface to *Endymion*, "and the mature imagination of a man is healthy; but there is a space of life between, in which the soul is in a ferment, the character undecided, the way of life uncertain, the ambition thick-sighted: thence proceeds mawkishness. . . ." The statement is perhaps even more applicable, in some respects, to the early sonnets than to *Endymion*. Although his earlier use of other lyrical forms is closely patterned after his eighteenth-century predecessors alone, and although his employment of the couplet mirrors at most only two or three strong separate influences, none of them greatly dissimilar in nature, yet the stylistic peculiarities of his early sonnets are manifold in number and diverse in origin, and seem to have been culled, unconsciously or at will, from almost the entire body of his reading.

In the verse written immediately after his earliest, eighteenth-century phase and before *Isabella*, Keats's attempt to secure a sensuously rich and luxurious medium of expression frequently resulted in looseness and languor, and the models which he followed at the time were largely such as to encourage this result. The sources of his early vocabulary have often been

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix A, pp. 189-191.

outlined.<sup>2</sup> His rather extreme tendency, for example, to use abstract nouns ending in *-ment* and *-ing* ("languishment," "embracement," "foldings," "mutterings," and the like); his excessive employment of *y*-ending adjectives ("palmy," "surgly," "pipy," and "slumberry"); and his frequent use of adverbs constructed from the present participle (such as "lingeringly" and "smilingly"); these somewhat mannered laxities, not to mention other and even less happy ones, are largely traceable to Hunt, Chapman, and William Browne. Together with such verbal influence from these poets there are a phraseology and a use of image—particularly in the early sonnets, as Raymond Havens has pointed out<sup>3</sup>—which, as in the very earliest of Keats's verse written before 1816, are closely akin to the Della Cruscans and to other eighteenth-century sonneteers. This combination of diverse influences, however, is perhaps more clearly revealed in other stylistic respects. Despite the momentary surge in the 1790's of sonnets written in the Shakespearcan rhyme-scheme, the Petrarchan pattern (*abba abba*, with varying sestet) regained its dominance with the turn of the century, partly owing, perhaps, to Wordsworth's use of it. Capel Lofft's upholding of its superiority in his *Laura* (1814) and Leigh Hunt's assiduous advocacy<sup>4</sup> are characteristic. The sonnet-form chosen by Keats was substantially that Petrarchan sonnet which—frequently varied in rhyme-schemes, abounding in vocatives and run-on lines, and employing specific peculiarities of pause and turn—was largely introduced by Thomas Edwards and Benjamin Stillingfleet, and which was employed with varying success in the latter half of the eighteenth century by Thomas Russell and the Della Cruscans, by Mary Tighe, Anna Seward, and Helen Maria Williams, and by Bowles, Southey, and Coleridge.<sup>5</sup> But within the conventional rhyme-frames of Keats's sonnets written before 1818, containing though they do stylistic patterns equally conventional, there also appear peculiarities of prosody and general structure which are in no way conventional and which seem to have been gathered from Shakespeare and

<sup>2</sup> See especially de Selincourt's admirable Appendix C in his *Poems of John Keats* (3rd ed., 1912), pp. 576-580.

<sup>3</sup> *Influence of Milton on English Poetry* (Cambridge, Mass., 1922), pp. 538-541.

<sup>4</sup> See in particular his article "On the Nature and Property of the Sonnet," in his *Book of the Sonnet* (1867), I, 8-15.

<sup>5</sup> See Appendix B, pp. 191-194.

Fletcher, from Milton and Wordsworth, possibly from Chapman and William Browne, and above all from Leigh Hunt.

The eighteenth-century sonnet was often characterized by structural laxity, particularly by a breaking-down of strict division between individual quatrains and octave and sestet.<sup>6</sup> Against this particular laxity, if hardly against any other, Leigh Hunt offered fitful opposition in both precept and practice. Although Keats's two earliest sonnets, *On Peace* and *To Byron*, over-run strict division, it is noteworthy that in only one<sup>7</sup> of the twenty-one sonnets of the 1817 volume is there any lack of a marked break between octave and sestet, and that in only five<sup>8</sup> is a similar break absent in the quatrains of the octave. In the first quatrain of the octave, moreover, Keats, like Hunt, occasionally made use of an end-stopped opening line, expanding and in some way illustrating this initial statement in the remaining three lines:

Glory and loveliness have passed away;  
For if we wander out in early morn,  
No wreathèd incense do we see upborne  
Into the east, to meet the smiling day.

The poetry of earth is never dead:  
When all the birds are faint with the hot sun,  
And hide in cooling trees, a voice will run  
From hedge to hedge about the new-mown mead.<sup>9</sup>

The example of Hunt, however, is perceptible in stylistic peculiarities which far transcend mere structural formation, and which lead less to restraint than to a deliberate negligence. Among such peculiarities is a liberal and distinctive use of stress-failure and trisyllabic feet, in which the influence of Chapman may likewise be discernible.<sup>10</sup> Perhaps a further instance is the treatment of inversion of accent. The initially inverted foot

<sup>6</sup> See p. 192, below.

<sup>7</sup> The atrocious sonnet, "Ah, who can e'er forget."

<sup>8</sup> *On Leaving Some Friends at an Early Hour, To G. A. W.*, "O Solitude," "Woman! when I behold thee," and "Ah, who can e'er forget."

<sup>9</sup> See also, "Great spirits now on earth," "Many the wonders," and "How many bards."

<sup>10</sup> See Appendix C, pp. 194-196.

—as in

*Much have* / I travell'd in the realms of gold,

*Oft of* / one wide expanse had I been told—

had long been extolled in eighteenth-century prosodic writing as a legitimate variety which in no way violated the metrical integrity of the line;<sup>11</sup> even Pope, careful though he was of varying the iambic measure, had used it very freely.<sup>12</sup> One is tempted to believe that it was precisely because, next to stress-failure, initial inversion was the commonest metrical variation of the preceding century that Hunt cut its use in his own verse, and sought other devices for avoiding metrical monotony. Keats followed Hunt—though the example of Chapman may also have encouraged him<sup>13</sup>—and likewise avoided any extensive use of initially inverted feet in his early sonnets: they total only 2.3%,<sup>14</sup> and the frequency is low not only in comparison with the verse of the preceding century, including the sonnets, but with Keats's own later verse as well.

Because it was felt that it broke, in some measure, the skeletal structure of the iambic line, medial inversion of accent—as in the line,

Took hap / py flights. / *Who shall* / his fame / impair  
(*Written on the Day*, 13),

or as in

Small bus / y flames / *play through* / the fresh / laid coals  
(*To My Brothers*, 1),—

<sup>11</sup> See, for example, John Newbery, *Art of Poetry* (1762), I, 11; John Mason, *Essay on the Power of Numbers* (1749), p. 43; Lord Kames, *Elements of Criticism* (Edinburgh, 1762), II, 384–385; Dr. Johnson, *Rambler*, No. 86; Lord Monboddo, *Origin and Progress of Language* (Edinburgh, 1774), II, 388 n.; and William Mitford, *Inquiry into the Principles of Harmony in Language* (2nd ed., 1804), p. 99. See also among the prosodists of Keats's own day, John Carey, *Practical English Prosody and Versification* (1816), p. 42.

<sup>12</sup> Initially inverted feet in the *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*, for example, total 5.4% (113).

<sup>13</sup> *Iliad*, I, 1–130: 2.1% (20).

<sup>14</sup> A total of 57; figured from the 21 sonnets of the 1817 volume.

had, during the course of the eighteenth century, been carefully avoided in practice and roundly condemned in theory. Bysshe, rather more lenient than many Augustan prosodists, had none the less only a bad word to say for it,<sup>15</sup> even the tolerant Daniel Webb censured it severely. The body of the pentameter line, said Webb,

is never more musical than when it consists entirely of iambic: on the contrary, two trochees in succession have an ill effect, as:

Gen'rous converse, a soul exempt from pride.<sup>16</sup>

Anselm Bayly likewise censured medial inversion,<sup>17</sup> as did Johnson and others.<sup>18</sup>

Now although in his *Examiner* review of the 1817 volume, he expressed disapproval of the double medial inversion of Keats's

How man / y bards / gild the / lapses / of time,

Hunt had always commended the use of at least some medial inversion; he had at some length criticized the lack of it in eighteenth-century poetry,<sup>19</sup> and had himself employed it to what was still considered a rather unusual degree (1.7%).<sup>20</sup>

<sup>15</sup> *Art of English Poetry* (4th ed., 1710), pp. 5-6.

<sup>16</sup> *Observations on the Correspondence between Poetry and Music* (1749), p. 107n.

<sup>17</sup> *Music, Poetry, and Oratory* (1789), p. 108.

<sup>18</sup> *Rambler*, No. 86. It is of special significance that even Lord Monboddoo—who, regarding Milton with reverence, was usually ready to sanction his metrical liberties (if not those of other poets), and who avenged Johnson's occasional harsh words on Milton's versification with even harsher epithets applied to Johnson's poetical ear—felt himself compelled to doubt the legitimacy of

Burnt af / ter him / to the / bottom / less pit.

Milton's intention, he agreed, was variety, and the inversion was consciously made; but it nonetheless "breaks the measure of the verse altogether" (*Origin and Progress of Language* [Edinburgh, 1774], II, 388). Sentiment against medial inversion was still strong after the turn of the century. See, for example, John Carey, p. 43, and William Crowe, *Treatise on English Versification* (1829), pp. 81-83 and 319n.

<sup>19</sup> See in particular the second edition of the *Fest of the Poets* (1815)—a copy of which Keats owned—pp. 34-35n.

<sup>20</sup> (14); from the twelve Petrarchan sonnets published before 1818 (the sonnets *To Barnes*, *To Alsager*, and *To Kosciuszko*, the five sonnets *To Hampstead*, *The Poets*, *To the Grasshopper* and *The Cricket*, *Engraving of a Portrait of Rafael*, and "A steeple issuing"). Cf. the excessive medial inversion in Chapman, in whom Keats may also have found precedent: *Iliad*, I, 1-130: 3.5% (32).

However much Keats was later to diminish, if not absolutely abolish it, medial inversion of accent is sometimes found in his early sonnets (.9%).<sup>21</sup> Yet it is by no means as frequent as it had been in Hunt's sonnets, and Keats's use of it occurs mainly in his early couplets (1.7%),<sup>22</sup> where metrical license was more deliberately sought by him.

The problem of pause or *cæsura* had been a large one in eighteenth-century verse, and care in *cæsural* placing had in general been as much exercised by the poets as it had been preached by the prosodists.<sup>23</sup> It had been felt that, since the iambic line as a unit concludes with a strong syllable, the pause should consequently come after a strong syllable, as in

Why did I write? (x) What sin to me unknown  
Dipp'd me in ink, (x) my parents', or my own?  
(*Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*, 125-126).

From a quarter to a third of the lines, however, were allowed to have the pause in the precise center (immediately after the fifth syllable, that is)—the *cæsura* thus being feminine and occurring after a light stress, as in

Soft were my numbers; (x) who could take offence  
While pure description (x) held the place of sense?  
Like gentle Fanny's (x) was my flowery theme,  
A painted mistress, (x) or a purling stream (147-150).

Since it was believed, too, that a *cæsura* towards the close of the line rendered the line top-heavy, and turned the latter half into something of a short tail—as in

I wish'd the man a dinner, (x) and sate still (152)—

it was likewise maintained that the *cæsura* should preferably come in the first half of the line.

It was in general felt throughout the eighteenth century that any balance of the decasyllabic line was impossible if the *cæsura* came before the fourth syllable or after the seventh. The syllables after which the *cæsura* might appear were consequently nar-

<sup>21</sup> (23); from the twenty-one sonnets of the 1817 volume.

<sup>22</sup> See Appendix E, p. 201.

<sup>23</sup> See pp. 203-209, where, in Appendix G, the eighteenth-century theory of pause is discussed at some length.

rowed down to the fourth, fifth, and sixth. A sparing use of the sixth-syllable-pause resulted from the preference for a cæsura in the first half-line; and the premium upon a masculine cæsura necessitated care against over-use of the pause after the lightly-stressed fifth syllable. A rather extreme partiality was consequently shown during the eighteenth century for the cæsura which came precisely after the second foot, or fourth syllable. From 25% to 30% of the lines, however, had it in the center, after the fifth syllable, and from 5% to 10% after the sixth; on only rare occasions might the pause be otherwise placed. Leigh Hunt argued against such restriction of pausing,<sup>24</sup> and his argument found practical illustration in his own verse. More than any other writer of his day, he consistently placed the cæsura as frequently in the second half-line as in the first, and even more after an unaccented syllable than one which was stressed. His sonnets, like his other verse, are replete with second-half-line and feminine cæsuras, the excessive use of which, as the Augustans were well aware, gave a continued falling rhythm, often resulting in lassitude and weakness:

The throng of life has strengthened, (x) without harm;  
You know the rural feeling, (x) and the charm . . .

'Tis now deep whispering (x) all about me here,  
With thousand tiny hushings, (x) like a swarm . . .

(*To Barnes*, 2-3, 5-6).

No other contemporary writer consistently varied his cæsuras with the liberality of Hunt, and the early sonnets of Keats, in this respect, follow Hunt's sonnets to a marked degree.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>24</sup> See especially the adverse analysis of Pope's cæsural placing in the second edition of Hunt's *Feast of the Poets* (1815), pp. 31-41.

<sup>25</sup> In the tabulation for Keats, the entire twenty-one sonnets of the 1817 volume have been included. In the count for Hunt, ten sonnets were analyzed (the sonnets *To Barnes* and *To Kosciuszko*, *Engraving of a Portrait of Rafael*, *The Poets*, *To the Grasshopper and the Cricket*, "As one who after long," "Sweet upland," "Winter has reached thee," "The baffled spell," and "A steeple issuing"). Here, and in all subsequent statistical notes, numbers in parentheses refer to number of occurrences. And in this and in all following tabulations of cæsuras, the number of the syllable after which the pause is stated to occur is not necessarily the actual syllable, numerically speaking, but rather the syllable which it takes in the theoretical scansion of the ten-syllable line. Thus, in the line "Of all the unhealthy (x) and o'er-darken'd ways," the pause would be said to come after the fifth syllable—that is, in the precise center; although, owing to an elidable trisyllabic foot, it is actually after the sixth syllable.

KEATS			HUNT		
After syllable:			After syllable:		
2:	2.7%	(8)	2:	2.8%	(4)
3:	3.4%	(10)	3:	3.5%	(5)
4:	23.8%	(70)	4:	22.1%	(31)
5:	34%	(90)	5:	30%	(42)
6:	15.9%	(47)	6:	16.5%	(23)
7:	12.5%	(37)	7:	12.8%	(18)
8:	1.3%	(4)	8:	.6%	(1)
Double or triple cæsuras: 8.5% (25)			11.4% (16) <sup>28</sup>		

This frequent tendency to use a late and feminine cæsura—as in

Kind Hunt was shut in prison, (x) yet has he,  
In his immortal spirit, (x) been as free (*Written on the Day*, 2-3)—

is perhaps the most noteworthy single metrical peculiarity of the early verse of Keats, and, except for Hunt, distinguishes Keats from almost the entire body of previous writers of English pentameter. "I shall have," he wrote, "The Reputation of Hunt's *élevé*. His corrections and amputations will by the knowing ones be traced";<sup>27</sup> and the statement was not made without warrant.

Despite the extent to which the shadow of Hunt is cast over the early sonnets of Keats, other influences, though to far less degree, guided their technical construction. Repetition of word or phrase, for example, is frequent:

*E'en then*, elate, my spirit leaps, and prances;  
*E'en then* my soul with exultation dances  
(*"Woman! when I behold thee,"* 6-7).

Minion of grandeur! *think you he* did wait?  
*Think you he* nought but prison walls did see?  
(*Written on the Day*, 5-6).

He of the cloud, the cataract, the lake,

He of the rose, the violet, the spring (*"Great spirits now,"* 2, 5).

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Pope's *Rape of the Lock*, II: 2nd: 4.2% (6); 3rd: .7% (1); 4th: 45.8% (65); 5th: 27.4% (39); 6th: 8.4% (12); 7th: 2.1% (3); 8th: 2.1% (3); double or triple cæsuras: 0.1% (13).

<sup>27</sup> To Bailey, Oct. 8, 1817, *Letters*, p. 53.



*Yet do I sometimes feel a languishment*

*Yet do I often warmly burn to see ("Happy is England," 5, 12).*

This repetition or parallelism of phrase and of line is almost totally absent in sonnets since the Elizabethans (except, on rare occasions, those of Thomas Russell, and Charlotte Smith), and equally lacking in the sonnets of Keats's contemporaries. It is perhaps safe to assert that it was caught directly from Shakespeare, whose sonnets Keats had been attentively reading, and that such repetition forecasts, in a relatively crude manner, far subtler rhetorical devices of parallelism and antithesis which abound in the later sonnets, and in which the influence of Shakespeare is clearly discernible.<sup>28</sup> Shakespearean influence may perhaps be detected also in the alternate-rhyming quatrains at the opening of the *cdcdcd* sestet, where—as in Shakespeare's use of the alternately-rhymed quatrains of his sonnet—interdependent alternate with dependent clauses:

And, as I feasted on its fragrantcy,  
I thought the garden-rose it far excell'd:  
But when, O Wells! thy roses came to me,  
My sense with their deliciousness was spell'd (*To a Friend*, 9-12).

The early sonnets of Keats, finally, in marked contrast to those he wrote later, make abundant use of the feminine ending, as in

Sweeter by far than Hybla's honied roses,  
When steep'd in dew rich to intoxication. . . .  
And when the moon her pallid face discloses,  
I'll gather some by spells, and incantation  
("Had I a man's fair form," 10-11, 13-14).

The feminine endings in the sonnets of the 1817 volume total 8.4%. Milton had used the feminine ending sparingly in his sonnets (3.8%); the sonneteers of the eighteenth century had avoided it almost entirely, while Hunt and Wordsworth employed it hardly more than Milton. It is not improbable that, in Keats's partiality in these sonnets for the feminizing ending, the influence of Shakespeare—whose feminine endings in the sonnets total 7.4%—is again manifest, although Keats may also have found encouragement in Fletcher.

<sup>28</sup> See later, pp. 120-125.

A tendency to make a marked division of the first quatrain towards the close of a run-on third line is sufficiently frequent in these sonnets to be designated as a mannerism:

How many bards gild the lapses of time!  
 A few of them have ever been the food  
 Of my delighted fancy,—I could brood  
 Over their beauties, earthly, or sublime.

The poetry of earth is never dead:  
 When all the birds are faint with the hot sun,  
 And hide in cooling trees, a voice will run  
 From hedge to hedge about the new-mown mead.

To one who has been long in city pent,  
 'Tis very sweet to look into the fair  
 And open face of heaven,—to breathe a prayer  
 Full in the smile of the blue firmament.<sup>29</sup>

Such a division is reminiscent in structure of Wordsworth's

It is a beauteous evening, calm and free,  
 The holy time is quiet as a nun  
 Breathless with adoration; the broad sun  
 Is sinking down in its tranquillity.

Although a somewhat similar division is found at rare intervals in the sonnets of Milton, Hunt, and Mary Tighe,<sup>30</sup> it occurs with relative frequency only in Wordsworth;<sup>31</sup> and it is not improbable that Wordsworth was the source of this mannerism in Keats's early sonnets.

<sup>29</sup> See also, e.g., *To a Friend Who Sent Me Some Roses*, *To G. A. W.*, and *To My Brother George*. This peculiarity of division may in infrequent instances be found in a quatrain other than the first, as in this immature and rather embarrassing quatrain:

From such fine pictures, heavens! I cannot dare  
 To turn my admiration, though unpossess'd  
 They be of what is worthy,—though not drest  
 In lovely modesty, and virtues rare ("Light feet, dark violet eyes," 5-8).

<sup>30</sup> See, for example, Milton's sonnets to Vane and to Lawes, Hunt's *To Barnes*, and Mrs. Tighe's "Poor, fond, deluded heart." I am aware of no other sonneteers who have employed this division, except possibly by accident, before Wordsworth.

<sup>31</sup> Typical instances are "Inland within a hollow vale," "Well may'st thou halt," "A Poet—he hath put his heart," and *To Touissant L'Ouverture*.

Run-on lines are numerous in these sonnets, and often continue for three lines together:

Had I a man's fair form, then might my sighs  
 Be echoed swiftly through that ivory shell  
 Thine ear, and find thy heart; so well  
 Would passion arm me for the enterprise.

After dark vapours have oppress'd our plains  
 For a long dreary season, comes a day  
 Born of the gentle South, and clears away  
 From the sick heavens all unseemly stains.

Leigh Hunt, on the whole, had employed run-on lines in his sonnets with some moderation (18.4%),<sup>32</sup> and, except for Anna Seward and Thomas Warton, it is improbable that the sonneteers of the preceding century had used run-on lines much more than this. In the sonnets of Keats's 1817 volume, however, run-on lines total 30.9% (91). Although Milton (41.4%)<sup>33</sup> may have furnished him with some encouragement, there is some evidence that the frequency of the run-on line in Keats's early sonnets is partially owing to the example of Wordsworth (30.2%),<sup>34</sup> who, following Milton, had been quite liberal in his use of it.

Patterned though they are in general after the eighteenth-century sonnet (as his other, earlier lyrics were patterned after the eighteenth-century treatment of their respective forms), the stylistic texture of Keats's early sonnets was woven of many and diverse strands. He drew upon rhyme-schemes conventional in many sonneteers of the eighteenth century, and also adopted from them stylistic devices which were largely peculiar to their own use and which he later took sedulous pains to avoid. At the same time, Keats turned chiefly to Hunt for prosodic guidance in these sonnets, and where Hunt led, Keats unhesitatingly followed. For example, except in the sonnet *To Byron*, written before he knew Hunt, Keats abandoned the

<sup>32</sup> From the twelve Petrarchan sonnets which Hunt published before 1818 (see above, p. 12, n. 20), and of which 31 lines are run-on.

<sup>33</sup> (107); figured from all the English sonnets.

<sup>34</sup> (144); figured from the thirty-four *Miscellaneous Sonnets* which were published before 1816 (Pt. I, 1-3, 5, 8-9, 12-14, 23-28, 30-33, 35-36; Pt. II, 2, 4, 10-12, 18, 20, 22-24, 29, 31, 36).

eighteenth-century cæsural placing of his earliest verse, and to quite a remarkable degree followed Hunt. Like Hunt, too, he tightened the structure of the octave quatrains, made abundant and peculiar use of the trisyllabic foot, and, with the example of Chapman also before him, employed medial inversion with perhaps more liberality than had been common for over a century. Like Shakespeare, he attempted various patterns of parallelism; with the practice of both Shakespeare and Fletcher to encourage him, he drew plentifully upon feminine endings, which had almost passed from English pentameter verse. Nor did the sonnets, finally, of Milton and Wordsworth, with their frequent run-on lines, fail to leave their impress. For the bulk of Keats's early sonnets, from whatever angle they are viewed, were largely experimental, and were consequently open to any stylistic suggestion that seemed to contribute towards the smooth and easy yet varied and luxurious medium of expression which Leigh Hunt had commended and which Keats desired to attain; and the metrical manner in which the sonnet was at first treated by Keats, even more perhaps than such matters as diction or imagery, is almost a microcosm in which were concentrated the heterogeneous influences of his reading.

## 2

## THE EARLY COUPLETS

Despite his gift for lyricism, the greater portion of Keats's earlier verse was epistolary and narrative rather than lyrical, and the form in which he composed this verse, the heroic couplet, was one which had largely dominated non-lyrical verse since the Restoration and which was by no means neglected in Keats's own day. But the metrical structure of the heroic couplet, as it was used at this time by Keats, was as radically divergent from traditional eighteenth-century practice as were the diction and imagery in it. The prosodic influences, moreover, which guided the temper and structure of Keats's early couplets—the influences of Chapman, Browne, and especially Hunt—were not, as in the case of the sonnets, influences which were often dissimilar in nature. They were, on the contrary, convergent rather than divergent. Together, they led, in Keats's mind, towards a

single goal: they furnished both sanction and means for avoiding the practice of those eighteenth-century poets who

sway'd about upon a rocking horse,  
And thought it Pegasus,

and for consequently securing a marked gain in that freedom and half-abandoned luxury of expression which at the time seemed to Keats so desirable an end.

Divergence from the closed couplet was less common in the eighteenth-century than some students of pre-romanticism have recently maintained.<sup>1</sup> Despite a slightly looser treatment of it by some writers during the latter half of the eighteenth century, it remained largely for Hunt to break the couplet entirely and at the same time add extreme variety of caesural placing, and in Keats Hunt found a disciple sufficiently zealous to keep pace with him in the latter practice and appreciably outstrip him in the former. From November, 1815, until the close of November, 1817, Keats composed eight rather lengthy poems in the heroic couplet: the *Epistle to Mathew* (November, 1815), a *Specimen of an Induction to a Poem* and *Calidore* (the spring of 1816), the epistles *To My Brother George* and *To Charles Cowden Clarke* (August, 1816), *Sleep and Poetry* and "I stood tiptoe" (November and December, 1816), and *Endymion* (from April to November, 1817). Throughout the handling of these couplets, there is a continual and chronologically progressive working towards freedom and perhaps even laxity of structure, stress, and pause.

With the critical sanction of Hunt's notes to *A Feast of the Poets*, which he probably studied with some care, and also with the example of the loose and open couplets of Hunt's *Politics and Poetics* and *Bacchus, or the Pirates* and of the even more frequent run-on lines (24.6%)<sup>2</sup> of William Browne's couplets in his *Britannia's Pastorals*, Keats at the outset began to employ far more run-on lines than either Browne or Hunt. By the time he wrote *Sleep and Poetry*, he was using as many as eleven run-on lines together:

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix D, pp. 196-197.

<sup>2</sup> (408 lines); from the first two Songs of Book I.

What though I am not wealthy in the dower  
 Of spanning wisdom; though I do not know  
 The shiftings of the mighty winds that blow  
 Hither and thither all the changing thoughts  
 Of man: though no great minist'ring reason sorts  
 Out the dark mysteries of human souls  
 To clear conceiving: yet there ever rolls  
 A vast idea before me, and I glean  
 Therefrom my liberty; thence too I've seen  
 The end and aim of Poesy. 'Tis clear  
 As anything most true; as that the year  
 Is made of the four seasons—manifest  
 As a large cross, some old cathedral's crest (284-296).

Indeed, run-on lines in the couplets of the 1817 volume total 35.4%<sup>3</sup>—a frequency well above even that of Browne.

Not only did he use more run-on lines in *Endymion*, where, according to Ridley, they reach the extraordinary total of 47%,<sup>4</sup> but also in the treatment of the couplet as a unit Keats increasingly moved towards excessive looseness. In the *Epistle to Mathew*, for example, 24.2% (11) of the couplets are more or less distinct units, as in the journeyman lines:

Felton! without incitements such as these,  
 How vain for me the niggard Muse to tease:  
 For thee, she will thy every dwelling grace,  
 And make 'a sunshine in a shady place' (72-75).<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup> 441 of 1243 lines.

<sup>4</sup> *Keats's Craftsmanship*, above, p. 305, Note J.

<sup>5</sup> In the compilation of such couplets, here and later, I have been concerned with couplets which may be said to be grammatically a unit, whether or not they are actually end-stopped. Thus, in addition to including strictly closed couplets, such as those above instanced, I have likewise included couplets introduced by a run-on line, but nonetheless capable of being considered a separate unit, as in the last two lines of

into that self-same lawn  
 All suddenly, with joyful cries, there sped  
 A troop of little children garlanded (*End.*, I, 108-110);

and couplets, too, which are themselves strictly run-on, but which are grammatically self sufficient, as in the first two lines of

Some idly trailed their sheep-hooks on the ground,  
 And some kept up a shrilly mellow sound  
 With ebon-tipped flutes . . . (*Ib.*, I, 145-147).

This percentage has a fairly close parallel with the frequency of such couplets in Browne (27.1%)<sup>6</sup>—whose *Britannia's Pastorals* Keats had already begun reading—and in Hunt's *Story of Rimini* (28.1%),<sup>7</sup> which, however, did not appear until the year after the *Epistle to Mathew* was written. Again, in the *Epistle to Mathew*, 42.2% (19) of the couplets, though grammatically dependent, are still not wholly run-on, as in the equally pedestrian lines:

Or a white Naiad in a rippling stream;  
Or a rapt seraph in a moonlight beam;  
Or again witness what with thee I've seen,  
The dew by fair feet swept from the green,  
After a night of some quaint jubilee  
Which every elf and fay had come to see (23-28).

This percentage, too, is close to those of Hunt (43.7%)<sup>8</sup> and of Browne (30%).<sup>9</sup> But in *Endymion* Keats broke the couplet far more radically, and went considerably beyond both Hunt and Browne: only 10% (19) of the couplets, in a passage analyzed, can in any way be described as independent; only 24% (45) of the rest are free from complete enjambment.<sup>10</sup>

This increasing break-down of the couplet in *Endymion* was accompanied and indeed largely brought about by a complete reversal of the traditional couplet structure through alteration of the position of line-stoppage. When an end-stopped line is used, in both Browne and Hunt, it is in a few instances the first in the couplet, while the second line runs deliberately on:

. . . his pains (who would not proffer  
Pains for such pleasures? were not great nor much,  
But that his labour's recompense was such  
As counterveilèd all (*Britannia's Pastorals*, I, 1, 35-38).

I yield, I yield.—Once more I turn to you,  
Harsh politics! and once more bid adieu  
To the soft dreaming . . . (*Politics and Poetics*, 134-136).

<sup>6</sup> (38); from *Britannia's Pastorals*, I, 5, 1-424 (omitting the non-couplets from ll. 163-306).

<sup>7</sup> (45); from Canto I.

<sup>8</sup> (70); see n. 2 for selection analyzed.

<sup>9</sup> (42); see n. 1.

<sup>10</sup> From I, 1-424. Cf., for example, Pope's *Rape of the Lock*, I and II: independent: 80%; subordinate but not run-on: 15.8%; run-on: 4.2%.

Such a practice is somewhat more frequent in the couplet narratives and epistles of the 1817 volume than in either Hunt or Browne, and even characterizes the opening of some of them:

Young Calidore is paddling o'er the lake; /  
His healthful spirit eager and awake  
To feel the beauty of a silent eve (*Cal.*, 1-3).

Full many a dreary hour have I past, /  
My brain bewilder'd, and my mind o'ercast  
With heaviness . . . (*To My Brother George*, 1-3).

What is more gentle than a wind in summer? /  
What is more soothing than the pretty hummer  
That stays one moment . . . (*Sleep and Poetry*, 1-3).

This reversal of conventional line-stoppage in the couplet is far more frequent in *Endymion*, and may almost be designated there as a consistent mannerism. Thus, for example, in the very opening of the poem it is used for fourteen lines together, except for the wholly enjambed couplet of lines 3 and 4:

A thing of beauty is a joy for ever: /  
Its loveliness increases; it will never  
Pass into nothingness; but still will keep  
A bower quiet for us, and a sleep  
Full of sweet dreams, and health, and quiet breathing. /  
Therefore, on every morrow, are we wreathing  
A flowery band to bind us to the earth, /  
Spite of despondence, of the inhuman dearth  
Of noble natures, of the gloomy days, /  
Of all the unhealthy and o'er-darkened ways  
Made for our searching: yes, in spite of all, /  
Some shape of beauty moves away the pall  
From our dark spirits. Such the sun, the moon, /  
Trees old, and young, sprouting a shady boon  
For simple sheep (I, 1-15).

Lack of discipline is manifested in other ways throughout these couplets. In marked contrast to his maturer verse, Keats sought a rapidity of flow in them, and drew far more upon stress-failure than he had even in his sonnets; and in doing so he occasionally violated all traditional English metrical practice



and often weakened his lines by the use of contiguous pyrrhic feet:

˘ ˘ ˘ ˘ ˘ ˘ ˘ ˘ ˘ ˘  
O Heark / ener / to the / loud clap / ping shears (*End.*, I, 279).

There is also an excessive use in the couplets of unstressed openings—

˘ ˘ ˘ ˘ ˘ ˘ ˘ ˘ ˘ ˘  
And in / his left / he held / a bask / et full (I, 155)—

and of unstressed endings,

˘ ˘ ˘ ˘ ˘ ˘ ˘ ˘ ˘ ˘  
Nor do / we mere / ly feel / these ess / encas (I, 25).

More even than in the sonnets, he drew upon feminizing endings, neglected the traditional device of initial inversion of accent, and, often deliberately revising to achieve his purpose, followed Chapman and Hunt in excessively varying his lines with medial inversion—

˘ ˘ ˘ ˘ ˘ ˘ ˘ ˘ ˘ ˘  
Trees old, / and young / sprouting / a shad / y boon (I, 14)—

and with trisyllabic feet,

˘ ˘ ˘ ˘ ˘ ˘ ˘ ˘ ˘ ˘  
Its del / icate am / ber; and / the dair / y pails (I, 44).<sup>11</sup>

Hiatus or vowel-gaping, moreover, is extreme and persistent in the early couplets. Despite its relative abundance in a few writers like Chapman and Sandys,<sup>12</sup> poets of the English Renaissance had in general tried to avoid it. Particular care had been exercised by Restoration and eighteenth-century poets to eschew vowel-gaping, and the condemnation of it by Cicero and Quintilian was often echoed in critical writing of the period. Dryden had expressed his wariness of it in the *Dedication of the Aeneis*,<sup>13</sup>

<sup>11</sup> For discussion of Keats's treatment in his early couplets of stress-failure, metrical inversion, feminine endings, and trisyllabic feet, and of the probable influence of Chapman, Browne, and Hunt on this treatment, see Appendix E, pp. 197-201.

<sup>12</sup> In the *Iliad*, I, 1-130, for example, 16.1% (21) of the lines contain hiatus. In Sandys's *Ovid*, I, 1-100, the total is 15% (15).

<sup>13</sup> *Essays* (ed. Ker, 1926), II, 216-217.

a wariness which was reiterated by Pope in the satiric line

Tho' oft the ear the open vowels tire

and in the prosodic letter to Cromwell,<sup>14</sup> and which was again reiterated by Johnson.<sup>15</sup> After the end of the eighteenth century, prosodists still cautioned against its use,<sup>16</sup> and it is of some significance that even in Hunt, who in so many respects deliberately cultivated slackness, lines containing hiatus are only about 4.1%<sup>17</sup>—a proportion not much above that of Pope (2.8%).<sup>18</sup> In the early couplets of Keats, however, hiatus is very common:

Fain would I echo back each common note.

That I am oft in doubt whether at all.

Or again witness what with thee I've seen (*Ep. Math.*, 13, 20, 25).

Vowel-gaping appears in 19.3% (18) of the lines of the *Epistle to Mathew*; it would perhaps be difficult to find a much higher consistent frequency in any other passage of English verse. In *Endymion* hiatus is decreased to about 17.3%.<sup>19</sup> By the time of *Lamia*, Keats had almost entirely eradicated it.

It was said earlier that eighteenth-century precept and practice had expressed and abided by the contention—long before maintained—that, unless the cæsure be placed in the main both in the first half of the line and after a stressed syllable, the result was a cloying laxity, a languor and effeminacy of rhythm; and the placing of pause in Keats's early sonnets, it will be remembered, had constituted an appreciable break from cæsural tradition. The couplets of the early epistles and of *Endymion*, like the early sonnets, have extreme variety of cæsural-placing; more even than in the sonnets, care is taken, in direct contrast

<sup>14</sup> Later rewritten as a letter to Walsh, in *Works* (edd. Elwin and Courthope, 871-1889), VI, 58-59.

<sup>15</sup> *Rambler*, No. 88.

<sup>16</sup> See, for example, William Crowe, *Treatise on English Versification* (1827), pp. 59-272.

<sup>17</sup> (14); *Story of Rimini*, I.

<sup>18</sup> (4); *Rape of the Lock*, II.

<sup>19</sup> (40); *End.*, I, 1-231.

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<sup>17</sup> (14); *Story of Rimini*, I.

<sup>18</sup> (4); *Rape of the Lock*, II.

<sup>19</sup> (40); *End.*, I, 1-231.

with English metrical tradition, to place the cæsura after a light stress and in the second-half-line.<sup>20</sup> The center, or post-fifth-syllable cæsura, coming after a weak stress is very common:

Spite of despondence, (x) of the inhuman dearth  
Of noble natures, (x) of the gloomy days,  
Of all the unhealthy (x) and o'er-darkened ways  
Made for our searching: (x) yes, in spite of all . . . (*End.*, 8-11).

The post-third-syllable pause is more common than in almost any other pentameter verse in the language:

Fair faces (x) and a rush of garments white

Now coming (x) from beneath the forest trees (I, 123, 148).

And in his use of the post-seventh-syllable pause, Keats simultaneously used a feminine and second half-line cæsura:

Now while the silent workings (x) of the dawn

Who gathering round the altar, (x) seem'd to pry

With a faint breath of music, (x) which ev'n then (I, 107, 111, 115).

Keats had found precedent for varied cæsural placing in Browne—who had nonetheless, like most pentameter writers before Hunt, preferred the post-fourth-syllable pause<sup>21</sup>—and,

<sup>20</sup> Thus, for example, in *End.*, I, 1-325; after odd-numbered or light syllables—53.2% (173); after even-numbered or strong syllables—44.9% (146); in 1st half-line—32.9% (107); in 2nd half-line—37.5% (119). Not even Hunt goes quite this far. In the *Story of Rimini*, II, 1-165, for example: feminine cæsuras (after odd-numbered or weak syllables)—48% (78); masculine cæsuras (after even-numbered or strong syllables)—46% (77); in 1st half-line—31.5% (52); in 2nd half-line—32.1% (53). A fair example of orthodox practice can be seen in Browne, who—though far more varied than most non-dramatic Elizabethan poets—has yet (*Britannia's Pastorals*, Book I, Song 5, 1-334,—omitting 24 non-pentameter lines): feminine, or post-weak-stress—30.6%; masculine, or post-strong-stress—64.5%; in 1st half-line—43.8% (136); in 2nd half-line—39.6% (86). In the above and subsequent counts of masculine or feminine cæsuras, lines containing double or more cæsuras have been omitted; in the counts of first half-line or second half-line cæsuras, lines having the pause after the fifth syllable—in the precise center—have been omitted.

<sup>21</sup> Thus, for example,—to compare with the tabulations of Hunt and Keats—in *Britannia's Pastorals*, I, 1-334 (omitting the 24 non-pentameter lines): 2nd syll: 1.6%; 3rd syll: 1.9%; 4th syll: 40.3%; 5th: 23.8%; 6th: 22.2%; 7th: 5.1%; 8th: .3%; double or more cæsuras: 4.9%. Typical of strict Augustan practice is the

like Browne, he avoided excessive use of the double or triple cæsura. In the couplets, however, as in his early sonnets, it is probable that Keats again followed Hunt. This seems particularly true of *Endymion*, where the placing of the pause agrees closely with that in Hunt's couplets, although it occasionally goes even beyond Hunt in its variety:

<i>Endymion</i> <sup>22</sup>		<i>Story of Rimini</i>	
After syllable:		After syllable:	
2:	1.8% (6)	2:	3% (5)
3:	7.7% (25)	3:	4.2% (7)
4:	24.5% (76)	4:	23.6% (39)
5:	29.3% (95)	5:	30.3% (50)
6:	18.6% (60)	6:	19.3% (32)
7:	11.6% (48)	7:	12.1% (20)
8:	1.2% (4)	8:	.6% (1)
Double or triple cæsuras: 2.4% (9)		6% (10)	

This close following of Hunt in the adjustment of pause—like the excessive employment of stress-failure, of medial inversion of accent, of a complete and peculiar breaking of the couplet, as well as the admission of hiatus and of trisyllabic feet of various kinds—was a part of that deliberate cultivation in Keats's early couplets of whatever devices would enable him to depart from the eighteenth-century versification which had cast its shadow over his earliest verse. To place him in the ladder of poetical development which he himself outlined near the close of the first book of *Endymion*, the specifically concrete towards which Keats's poetical bent was always directed was still the "rose-leaf" and little else, at least on the stylistic level. "When a tale is beautifully staid," he wrote in "I stood tiptoe,"

When it is moving on luxurious wings,  
The soul is lost in pleasant smotherings.

cæsural-placing of Pope's *Rape of the Lock* (see above, p. 15, n. 26); characteristic of somewhat less strict Augustan pause placing is Dryden's *Absalom and Achitophel*, 1-229: 2nd: .9%; 3rd: 2.6%; 4th: 45.1%; 5th: 27.6%; 6th: 13.6%; 7th: 4.8%; 8th: .Q; double or triple pause: 5.7% (omitting one short dangling line from the counts). See also Appendix G, pp. 203-209.

<sup>22</sup> I, 1-325 (omitting 6 dangling lines). The count from the *Story of Rimini* is from II, 1-165, which, from the point of view of cæsural placing, is perhaps the most characteristic passage in Hunt's couplets.

Whether or not the losing of the soul "in pleasant smotherings" was still a very conscious end by the time of the writing of *Endymion*, the stylistic tone of the poem would appear to point that way; and in order to achieve this end, Keats certainly attempted to give his narrative "luxurious wings." In the composition of these couplets and above all in *Endymion*, Keats, in a manner at times feverishly immature, sought the utmost luxury and liberality of expression. These qualities, however, he had not as yet clearly distinguished from indolence and abandon, from slackness and negligence. His mind, as he saw later, had been "like a pack of scattered cards,"<sup>23</sup> and *Endymion* was "slipshod."<sup>24</sup> But then

The Genius of Poetry must work out its own salvation in a man: It cannot be matured by law and precept, but by sensation & watchfulness in itself. That which is creative must create itself—In *Endymion*, I leapt headlong into the Sea, and thereby have become better acquainted with the Soundings, the quicksands, & the rocks, than if I had stayed upon the shore, and piped a silly pipe, and took tea & comfortable advice.<sup>25</sup>

## 3

## ISABELLA

Keats had grown "tired" of *Endymion*, as he was concluding it; his opinion of it was "very low," and "all the good" he expected from it was "the fruit of Experience."<sup>1</sup> It was characterized by "great inexperience, immaturity, and every error denoting a feverish attempt rather than a deed accomplished."<sup>2</sup> He doubtless questioned the poetic validity of the mannered exuberance and laxity of style which he had been deliberately cultivating. "In Poetry I have a few Axioms," he wrote to his publisher, Taylor, soon after finishing *Endymion*,

and you will see how far I am from their Centre. 1st. I think Poetry should surprise by a fine excess and not by Singularity—it should strike the Reader as a wording of his own highest thoughts, and appear

<sup>23</sup> To Shelley, Aug., 1820, *Letters*, p. 507.

<sup>24</sup> To Hessey, Oct. 9, 1818, *ibid.*, p. 222.

<sup>25</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>1</sup> To Haydon, Sept. 28, 1817, *ibid.*, p. 51.

<sup>2</sup> Preface to *Endymion*.

almost a Remembrance . . . I am anxious to get *Endymion* printed that I may forget it and proceed.<sup>3</sup>

In the four months following the conclusion of *Endymion* in November, 1817, Keats acted upon Hunt's continual exhortations to his friends to read Italian verse and prose, and he read, among others, the story in Boccaccio of the Pot of Basil, from which *Isabella* was adapted. But, although his next major poem was itself one of those short metrical romances with which Hunt had advocated replacing the longer metrical romances of the Italians and of Spenser, Keats at this time began to chafe strongly against Hunt's influence. He expressed dissatisfaction with the sentimentality and bathos of phrase and of image which he himself had earlier caught from Hunt, and against which he now cautioned Reynolds:

Moreover (and this is the only word or two I find fault with, the more because I have had so much reason to shun it as a quicksand) the last has "tender and true." We must cut this, and not be rattlesnaked into any more of the like. . . . I will cut all this—I will have no more of Wordsworth or Hunt in particular.<sup>4</sup>

He found that not a little of what had attracted him was inextricably associated with Hunt:

It is a great Pity that People should by associating themselves with the finest things, spoil them. Hunt has damned Hampstead and Masks and Sonnets and Italian tales.<sup>5</sup>

Again, some months later:

Hunt keeps on in his old way—I am completely tired of it all—He has lately published a Pocket-Book call'd the literary Pocket-Book—full of the most sickening stuff you can imagine. . . .

[Hunt] is certainly a pleasant fellow in the main when you are with him—but in reality he is vain, egotistical, and disgusting in matters of taste. . . . Hunt does one harm by making fine things petty and beautiful things hateful—Through him I am indifferent to Mozart, I care not for white Busts—and many a glorious thing when associated with him becomes a nothing.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>3</sup> February 27, 1818, *Letters*, pp. 108–109.

<sup>4</sup> February 3, 1818, *ibid.*, pp. 95–96.

<sup>5</sup> To Haydon, Mar. 14, 1818, *ibid.*, p. 118.

<sup>6</sup> To George and Georgiana Keats, Dec., 1818—Jan. 4, 1819, *ibid.*, pp. 248 and 252.

Keats now made a strong attempt, in the months that followed the completion of *Endymion*, to liberate himself in every way from the influence of Hunt. In *Isabella*, which was written in 1818, the occasional mawkish sentimentality of diction betrays the continued and even heightened influence of Hunt; yet in the main the poem stylistically reveals this effort towards emancipation.

The slow and almost drugged movement of Keats's maturest verse is perhaps owing in some degree to its comparative lack of Latinity and polysyllabic words. Although a Latinized vocabulary, when used by such a poet as Milton, can impart a notable sonority to verse, it rarely seems to retard the tempo of verse movement. The rapidity of the couplets of Dryden and Pope is probably facilitated by the Latinity of their diction: the very length of words of Latin origin, and their comparative paucity of strong consonants, such as stops, and especially the relative absence of contiguous consonants allow them to be pronounced with less effort and more apparent rapidity than words of Germanic origin. Indeed, out of the first 300 words of *Absalom and Achitophel*, for example, 22% (66) are of Latin origin. Shelley, again, whose diction is less Latin than it first appears to be, and who attains rapidity of flow, as a rule, through metrical rather than verbal effects, has an average Latinity of 13.3% in one of his least Latin poems, the *Ode to the West Wind*. Now in his early verse Keats, like Hunt, had shown a probably unconscious inclination to use a diction relatively soft in phonetic texture, often lacking in strong consonants, and frequently Latin in origin:

Full in the middle of this pleasantness  
There stood a marble altar, with a tress  
Of flowers budded newly; and the dew  
Had taken fairy phantasies to strew. . . .

Of brightness so unsullied, that therein  
A melancholy spirit well might win  
Oblivion, and melt out his essence fine  
Into the winds: rain-scented eglantine  
Gave temperate sweets . . . (*End.*, I, 89-92, 97-101).



In *Endymion*, I, for example, 15%<sup>7</sup> of the words are of Latin derivation—a marked contrast to the ode, *To Autumn*, which is the slowest in movement of the odes, and which averages only 8.3%. In *Isabella*, Latinity had already been cut by one-fifth (to 12.2%).<sup>8</sup> Such a drop in Latinity, of course, in no way implies that Keats was conscious of Latinity as a problem; it is merely symptomatic at most of a change in the kind of diction he was employing.

Shortness of words, again, is often a contributing factor in slowing the progress of a line, if for no other reason than the slight pause necessary between individual words. Although Webb<sup>9</sup> and Mitford<sup>10</sup> assumed that the relative speed or slowness of monosyllabic line could be as well explained by other phenomena as by the monosyllables themselves, it had been the common eighteenth-century prosodic opinion that, while polysyllabic words facilitated flow, monosyllables retarded it; for, to cite Johnson, "being of *Teutonical* original, or formed by contraction . . . [monosyllables] commonly begin and end with a consonant."<sup>11</sup> Characteristic is the implication of Pope in the line, "And ten low words oft creep in one dull line," and his assertion, in the prosodic letter to Walsh, that monosyllables "unless very artfully managed, are stiff, or languishing: but may be beautiful to express melancholy, slowness, or labour."<sup>12</sup> Pope himself often abided by this belief in intentionally slow lines, such as

And strain from hard bound brains eight lines a year,

or

When Ajax strives some rock's vast weight to throw,  
The line, too, labours, and the words move slow.

<sup>7</sup> A total of 1103 words out of 7330 in Book I. Other word counts from *Endymion* are likewise taken from Book I and figured against the total number of words in the book (7330). It should be added that in this, and in all other word counts, compound words have been considered as single words; and, as far as the count of Latinity is concerned, such words have been included when (except for mere prefixes and suffixes) they were in part of Latin origin.

<sup>8</sup> 482 out of a total of 3931 words. Other word counts from *Isabella* are also figured against this total (3931).

<sup>9</sup> *Observations on the Correspondence between Poetry and Music*, pp. 105-106.

<sup>10</sup> *Inquiry into the Principles of Harmony in Language*, pp. 412-414.

<sup>11</sup> *Rambler*, No. 88.

<sup>12</sup> *Works*, edition cited, VI, 58.

However this may be, it is pertinent that, in some contrast to the bulk of his maturest verse, Keats, like Hunt, at first drew upon a diction which is relatively polysyllabic for English poetry, although not, of course, for English prose; and that, with *Isabella*, this practice began to decrease.<sup>13</sup>

Until after the composition of *Endymion*, Keats, again like Hunt, had used adjectives rather frequently but had hardly exhausted the potentialities of the verb. Typical would be eight lines from *Endymion*:

Some shape of beauty moves away the pall  
From our *dark* spirits. *Such* the sun, the moon,  
Trees *old*, and *young*, sprouting a *shady* boon  
For *simple* sheep; and *such* are daffodils  
With the *green* world they live in; and *clear* rills  
That for themselves a *cooling* covert make  
'Gainst the *hot* season; the *mid forest* brake,  
*Rich* with a sprinkling of *fair* musk-rose blooms (I, 12-19).

Here adjectives far outnumber verbs. But in a stanza from *Isabella*, with the same number of lines, very much the opposite is true:

She *weeps* alone for pleasures not to *be*;  
Sorely she *wept* until the night *came* on,  
And then, instead of love, O misery!  
She *brooded* o'er the luxury alone:  
His image in the dusk she *seemed* to *see*,  
And to the silence *made* a gentle moan,  
*Spreading* her perfect arms upon the air,  
And on her couch low *murmuring* 'Where? O where?' (xxx).

In *Isabella*, indeed, Keats was already seeking strength and discipline by drawing upon the verb rather than the adjective.<sup>14</sup> The extent to which Keats was now conscious of the verb is occasionally illustrated by the manuscript revisions. Thus the

<sup>13</sup> In *Endymion*, I, for example, 27.1% (2090) of the words are of two syllables or more, while 6.9% (505) are of three or more. There is already a decrease of polysyllabic diction in *Isabella*: 22.3% (878), or a fifth less, of the words are of two or more syllables, while 5.6% (223), or about a sixth less, are of three or more.

<sup>14</sup> Adjectives total 16% (1176) in *Endymion*, I, and drop about a seventh to 13.8% (554) in *Isabella*; verbs in *Endymion*, I, amount to 13.6% (1001), and in *Isabella* rise by almost a seventh to 15% (592).

modifying clause in

It aches in loneliness—as ill at peace  
As the break-covert blood hounds of such sin (xxviii, 4-5)

was altered to a parallel clause by the introduction of a verb:

It aches in loneliness—is ill at peace  
As the break-covert . . .

Care is likewise manifested in the introduction of stronger, more active verbs, as in the replacement of

They could not surely *have* belief that such (lviii, 5)  
with

They could not surely *give* belief . . . ;

or as in the alteration of "Three hours *were* they" (xlviii, 6) to "Three hours they *labour'd*."

Avoiding the loose and enjambed couplet of Hunt, Keats now sought to cast his verse narrative in a comparatively rigid stanzaic medium. The stanza he chose was *ottava rima* (*abababcc*), which, first introduced into English by Wyatt, had been infrequently used by Spenser, Drayton, Drummond, and a few other Elizabethans, and which during the eighteenth century had received some attention from Gay, Blacklock, and Chatterton. The stanza had in a sense been resurrected in Keats's own day by the Scottish Oriental scholar, William Tennant, and by Hookham Frere. Their use of the stanza for burlesque and satire—a use well warranted by the very nature of the stanza, with the clinch and snap of its concluding couplet—was quickly followed by William Rose, Barry Cornwall, a few other minor versifiers, and, in particular, by Byron. After *Isabella*, it was employed rather loosely by Shelley, Wordsworth, Hood, and in a few Italian translations by Hunt and Lord Glenbervie.

Although Keats's choice of the stanza, which was perhaps an unfortunate one for his purpose, was probably directed merely by its prevalence among the Italians, his treatment of it seems to have been guided largely by Fairfax's translation of Tasso, which he had long since read with Cowden Clarke at Enfield, and with which he had by no means lost his familiarity. Fairfax, like all writers of the English Renaissance, showed an inclina-

tion to place the cæsure after a masculine or stressed syllable and in the first half line.<sup>15</sup> Keats, who in his early pentameter lines had closely followed Hunt in doing the precise opposite, began in *Isabella* to move towards traditional cæsural placing.<sup>16</sup> The influence of Fairfax may have helped to dictate this increasing restraint in the placing of pause. It also possibly fostered a more sparing and orthodox use of the trisyllabic and medially inverted feet which, following Hunt and Chapman, he had freely cultivated in his previous verse.<sup>17</sup>

Still more obvious indications of stylistic discipline are discernible in *Isabella*. The unstressed beginning—

And *with* / sick longing all the night outwear

And *at* / the least 'twill startle off her cares (iii, 7; v, 8)—

which had characterized 10.7% of the lines of the *Epistle to Mathew* and had been cut to 8% in *Endymion*, is further diminished to 6.7% (34) in *Isabella*. Hiatus, or vowel-gaping, is still fairly frequent:

Her lute string gave an echo of his name (ii, 7).

A whole long month of May in this sad plight (iv, 1).

Tomorrow will I ask my lady's boon (iv, 4).

However, the reduction already manifest from 19.3% of the lines in the *Epistle to Mathew* to about 17.3% in *Endymion* is continued to 12.3% (62) in *Isabella*. Again, feminine endings, with which the couplets of the 1817 volume had perhaps been

<sup>15</sup> Thus, in Book I of the *Recovery of Jerusalem*: after masculine, or strong syllables: 63% (126); after feminine: 25% (50); 1st-half-line: 51% (102); 2nd-half-line: 20% (40). Here, and in subsequent counts of masculine or feminine and first or second-half-line cæsuras, double or triple pauses are omitted.

<sup>16</sup> Masculine: 51.5% (260); feminine: 41% (206); 1st-half-line: 42.2% (212); 2nd-half-line: 28% (140).

<sup>17</sup> For analysis of the placing of pause, stress-failure, and the use of initially and medially inverted, spondaic, and trisyllabic feet in Fairfax and in *Isabella*, see Appendix F, pp. 201-203.

over-liberally endowed (24%) but which were radically cut in *Endymion* (to 5¼%), have been diminished in *Isabella* to only 2.9%—a percentage hardly greater than that of Fairfax (2.4%).<sup>18</sup> Yet it should be added that, as in Fairfax—

And threat'neth death to those, fire, sword, and slaughter,  
Who held captive Israel's fairest daughter (I, lxxxi, 7-8)—

and in contrast to the *ottava rima* as used by most of Keats's contemporaries, feminine endings are occasionally allowed in the concluding couplet of the stanza:

They passed the water  
Into a forest quiet for the slaughter (xxvii, 7-8).

To-day thou wilt not see him, nor to-morrow,  
And the next day will be a day of sorrow (xxix, 7-8).

Although still high when compared, for example, to Fairfax,<sup>19</sup> run-on lines are little more than half as frequent as they were in *Endymion*.<sup>20</sup> Not only are run-on lines in general less numerous, but care has also been taken to make grammatical division by pairs of lines, as Fairfax did, and thus keep the even-numbered or *b*-rhyme line end-stopped:

With every morn their love grew tenderer,  
With every eve deeper and tenderer still; /  
He might not in field, house, or garden stir,  
But her full shape would all his seeing fill; /  
And his continual voice was pleasanter  
To her, than noise of trees or hidden rill; /  
Her lute-string gave an echo of his name,  
She spoilt her half-done broidery with the same.

He knew whose gentle hand was at the latch,  
Before the door had given her to his eyes; /  
And from her chamber-window he would catch  
Her beauty farther than the falcon spies; /  
And constant as her vespers he would watch,  
Because her face was turn'd to the same skies; /

<sup>18</sup> Cantos I and II of the *Recovery of Jerusalem*.

<sup>19</sup> Book I: 13.3% (96).

<sup>20</sup> 26% (131) as compared to 47%.

And with sick longing all the night outwear,  
To hear her morning-step upon the stair (ii, iii).<sup>21</sup>

This adherence to traditional *ottava rima* structure, which he had found in Fairfax, was closely interwoven with Keats's other attempts to achieve now the stylistic and structural discipline which the preaching and example of Hunt had previously taught him to neglect or deliberately to avoid.

Some emphasis was earlier laid on Keats's tendency in the early sonnets to use parallelism and repetition. These devices are more frequently and skilfully employed in his later sonnets, where even more than before they reveal a marked Shakespearean influence.<sup>22</sup> Rhetorical expedients somewhat similar are to be found elsewhere in Keats's reading besides Shakespeare, notably in Fairfax and his Italian progenitors, and these same devices are abundantly present in *Isabella*. It is probable that Keats, who was making a strong attempt at the time to break stylistically from Hunt, now sought by further and more flagrant employment of repetition and parallelism to gain additional emphasis and tightness of line and stanza.

Hunt, in his *Critique on Fairfax's Tasso*, dwelt somewhat adversely upon Fairfax's tendency, caught from the Italians, to "heap a line with descriptive nouns and adjectives . . . occupying a line here and there either with epithets almost synonymous, or with a marked detail of nouns,"<sup>23</sup> as in:

Each band, each troop, each person, worth regard (I, lxxv, 2).

Of ships, hulks, galleys, barks, and brigantines,

<sup>21</sup> So extensively is this practice true of *Isabella* that only 15.4% (39) of its even-numbered lines are run-on—an amount appreciably below that, I believe, of all other contemporary writers in the stanza except possibly Hookham Frere. When run-on even-numbered lines occur, Keats is careful to permit no more than one in a stanza: only six stanzas have two or more (xxiii, xxvii, xxxii, xxxv, xxxvii, lvii, lxii); and of these only two stanzas have three (xxxv, xxxvii). There is reason to think that Leigh Hunt cared little for this discipline: he certainly did not over-employ it in his own *ottava rima*. In Fairfax, however, only .8% (3) of the even-numbered lines (in Book I of the *Recovery of Jerusalem*) are run-on.

<sup>22</sup> See below, pp. 120–125.

<sup>23</sup> *Critique on Fairfax's Tasso*, in Fairfax's *Recovery of Jerusalem* (ed. Knight, 1849), p. xii.

From Venice, Genes, and towns which them confines,  
From Holland, England, France, and Sicile sent (I, lxxix, 2, 6-7).

Pure, spotless, clean, untouch'd of mortal wight (VI, xcvi, 6).

Such instances abound in Fairfax. Repetition of word or phrase—more immediately contiguous and more obviously rhetorical than the Shakespearean repetition used by Keats in the later sonnets—is also common in Fairfax:

On her at gaze his longing looks he set,  
Sight, wonder; wonder, love! love bred his care;  
O love, O wonder; love new born, new bred,  
Now grown, now arm'd, this champion captive led (I, lvii, 5-8).

Sophia by Adige flowery bank him bore,  
Sophia the fair, spouse to Bertolda great (I, lxiv, 1-2).

No towers, defenc'd with rampire, mote, or wall,  
No stream, no wood, no mountain could forslow  
Their hasty pace, or stop their march at all (I, lxxv, 2-4).

And in such lines as

Nice by assault, and Antioch by surprise (I, vi, 3)

or

Armed, a Mars might coyest Venus move,  
And if disarm'd, then God himself of Love (I, lviii, 7-8),

Hunt found in Fairfax an "over-tendency to contrast," traceable to Marino.<sup>24</sup>

Keats likewise employs epithet, noun, or phrase to add and qualify:

He might not in house, field, or garden stir (ii, 3).

I would not grieve  
Thy hand by unwelcome pressing, would not fear  
Thine eyes by gazing . . . (viii, 5-7).

<sup>24</sup> *Loc. cit.*

Today we purpose, aye, this hour we mount (xxiv, 1).

. . . for soon into her heart a throng  
Of higher occupants, a richer zest,  
Came tragic . . . (xxxi, 5-7).

And occasional use is made of the "contrast" which Hunt condemned in Fairfax:

The *little sweet* doth kill *much bitterness* (xiii, 2)

She *weeps* alone for *pleasures* not to be

And then instead of *love*, O *misery!* (xxx, 1, 3).

Repetition of word, phrase, and line is almost a mannerism in *Isabella*:

Fair Isabel, poor simple Isabel (i, 1).

Tomorrow will I bow to my delight,  
Tomorrow will I ask my lady's boon (iv, 3-4).

All close they met again, before the dusk  
Had taken from the stars its pleasant veil,  
All close they met, all eves, before the dusk  
Had taken from the stars its pleasant veil (xi, 1-4).

O Melancholy, linger here awhile!  
O Music, Music, breathe despondingly!  
O Echo, Echo, from some sombre isle,  
Unknown, Lethean, sigh to us—O sigh! (lv, 1-4).

Pulci, said Hunt in his *Critique on Fairfax's Tasso*, "seems to take pleasure in . . . beginning a whole stanza or more with the same word."<sup>25</sup> Keats may possibly have heard Hunt's condemnation orally expressed, and have had his attention consequently directed to precisely what Hunt thought it well to avoid, and then have proceeded in good time to imitate it—although some slight precedent would have existed for him in Fairfax also. For Keats, too, "seems to take pleasure" in be-

<sup>25</sup> *Loc. cit.*



ginning almost an entire stanza with the same word or phrase, as in

Too many tears for lovers have been shed,  
 Too many sighs give we to them in fee,  
 Too much of pity after they are dead,  
 Too many doleful stories do we see (xii, 2-5).

Why were they proud? Because their marble founts  
 Gush'd with more pride than do a wretch's tears?—  
 Why were they proud? Because fair orange-mounts  
 Were of more soft ascent than lazar stairs?—  
 Why were they proud? Because red-lin'd accounts  
 Were richer than the songs of Grecian years?—  
 Why were they proud? again we ask aloud,  
 Why in the name of Glory were they proud? (xvi).

And she forgot the stars, the moon, and sun,  
 And she forgot the blue above the trees,  
 And she forgot the dells where waters run,  
 And she forgot the chilly autumn breeze (liii, 1-4).

The influence of Dryden may possibly have contributed to that of Fairfax in the writing of *Isabella*. Buxton Forman pointed out a striking parallel in diction and image between a stanza in *Annus Mirabilis* and one in *Isabella*; and it might also be argued that the distinct division of the heroic quatrains of *Annus Mirabilis* into pairs of lines—

Trade, which like blood should circularly flow,  
 Stopped in their channels, found its freedom lost; /  
 Thither the wealth of all the world did go,  
 And seem'd but shipwreck'd on so base a coast (ii)—

was not without supporting influence on that strict division of lines by pairs in *Isabella* which Keats had already found in Fairfax. A balance of noun, verb, or phrase, which somewhat anticipates that later found in *Lamia*, is frequent in *Isabella*:

So once more he had waked and anguishèd  
 A dreary night of love and misery (vii, 1-2).

And bade the sun farewell, and joy'd his fill (x, 8).

In hungry pride and gainful cowardice (xvii, 2).

I thought some Fate with pleasure or with strife  
 Portion'd us—happy days, or else to die (xlii, 3-4).

The flint was there, the berries at his head (xliv, 8).

And so she pined, and so she died forlorn (lxiii, 1).

It should be noted, furthermore, that the use of a completely closed concluding couplet, as in

They could not, sure, beneath the same roof sleep  
 But to each other dream, and nightly weep (i, 7-8),

is unusually prevalent in *Isabella*. In Fairfax, for example, 47.5%<sup>26</sup> of the concluding couplets in each stanza are completely independent. Except, to some extent, for Leigh Hunt, employers of *ottava rima* in Keats's own day likewise strove, as a rule, to preserve the structural integrity of the concluding couplet, although few did so as extensively as Fairfax. Keats, however, considerably excels even Fairfax in the number of independent concluding couplets: they total 58.6% (34). The excessive use in *Isabella* of a terminating closed couplet again indicates Keats's effort in this poem to secure the discipline and unity of structure he had lacked. It is not unlikely that these couplets were somewhat influenced by Dryden. A good portion, indeed, of the Drydenian balance in *Isabella* is found in the concluding couplets, as in:

I'll visit thee for this, and kiss thine eyes,  
 And greet thee morn and even in the skies (xlii, 7-8).

Then 'gan she work again; nor stay'd her care,  
 But to throw back at times her veiling hair (xlvii, 7-8).

Pale Isabella kiss'd it, and low moan'd.  
 'Twas love; cold,—dead indeed, but not dethroned (l, 7-8).

The use of the favorite eighteenth-century variation, the initially inverted foot—

Tinting / with silver wan your marble tombs (lv, 8)—

<sup>26</sup> (89); from Books I and II.

though still in general rather low (3.3%), is almost as high in the concluding couplets (5.2%)<sup>27</sup> as it is in Pope (5.4%).<sup>28</sup> Another marked eighteenth-century characteristic of the concluding couplets of *Isabella* is cæsural. Keats had already broken from Hunt to the point where he was showing preference for a masculine cæsura—a cæsura, that is, after an accented syllable. When considered as separate units, however, the number of masculine pauses in the concluding couplets of *Isabella* (55.5%) appreciably excels the number in the sestets (46.5%) and is not much below the frequency in Dryden's couplets (61.3%).<sup>29</sup>

"I will give you reasons," Keats later wrote to Woodhouse, why I shall persist in not publishing *The Pot of Basil*. It is too smokeable. I can get it smoak'd at the carpenters shaving chimney much more cheaply—there is too much inexperience of life, and simplicity of knowledge in it. . . . *Isabella* is what I should call were I a reviewer 'A weak-sided Poem' with an amusing sober-sadness about it.<sup>30</sup>

Entirely aside from its subject, there is indeed much "inexperience" in its treatment and its form. Imaginative flashes anticipatory of Keats's later verse do occur:

And she forgot the *blue above the trees*,

She had no knowledge when the day was done (liii, 2, 5).

These instances are few, however, and are in part noticeable through their rarity. Even in them it may be questioned whether there is completely present the simultaneous felicity and condensation of epithet and of phrase with which the maturer verse of Keats is fraught. Neither are there present, except in a few prophetic instances, the metrical and other stylistic devices with which Keats later sought to enrich and strengthen his lines.

*Isabella* none the less illustrates the nature of Keats's stylistic advance between the composition of *Endymion* and that of *Hyperion*. It reveals a careful employment, however diverse and disunited their character, of prosodic and rhetorical devices

<sup>27</sup> (33); figured against the total number of feet in the concluding couplets throughout the poem.

<sup>28</sup> (113); *Epistle of Dr. Arbuthnot*. Cf. *Rape of the Lock*, II: 5% (84).

<sup>29</sup> (135); *Fables, Cock and the Fox*, 1-220.

<sup>30</sup> Sept. 21, 1819, *Letters*, p. 391.

of discipline and restraint. His very earliest lyrics had been cast in the technical mold of the lyrics of the preceding century, with patterns of phrase and pause, of metrical variation and stanzaic structure, which were consequently conservative; but under the influence of Chapman, Fletcher, William Browne, and especially Leigh Hunt, he radically broke from the prosodic traditions of the century before—from traditional practices, in some cases, of English verse as a whole—and deliberately cultivated the utmost laxity and liberality of expression. After the completion of *Endymion*, however, he attempted to rid his verse of this negligent slackness. His diction became less polysyllabic, more native in origin, a bit stronger in consonantal and phonetic body; he cut the adverb and adjective and drew more upon the verb; he employed patterns of pause and stress more closely conventional; he made use, however crudely, of devices of repetition and parallelism upon which his former mentor, Hunt, had frowned, but which Keats himself believed would add emphasis and structural tightness to his lines; and he attempted, finally, to write his verse-narrative in a closely-knit stanza rather than in the loose and flowing couplet of Browne and of Hunt. For what Keats now sought, with whatever misjudgment on occasion of their particular efficacy, were means by which he might achieve that poetic discipline and restraint without which luxury and intensity are only weak license and abandon, and with which even the commonplace may achieve a force and a significance.

## II

### INTENSITY AND RESTRAINT

"The excellence of every art is its intensity, capable of making all disagreeables evaporate from their being in close relationship with Beauty and Truth."

—Letter to George and Thomas Keats

Let us inspect the Lyre, and weigh the stress  
Of every chord, and see what may be gain'd  
By ear industrious, and attention meet;  
Misers of sound and syllable, no less  
Than Midas of his coinage.

—Letter to George and Georgiana Keats.

"An artist must serve Mammon. . . . You might curb your magnanimity, and be more of an artist, and load every rift of your subject with ore."

—Letter to Shelley.

THE WRITING of Keats between the composition of *Hyperion* in the autumn of 1818 and the last of the odes of the following May is superficially divergent in stylistic and structural technique. These divergencies, however, are manifestations of a common tendency which runs throughout the whole of his verse, particularly that which was written during the course of these eight or nine months. For there was in Keats, as was emphasized at the outset of this study, an instinctive and almost nostalgic craving for absorption and even self-annihilation in that which for him was poetical and which was on all occasions the specifically concrete—a desire, indeed, from which his con-

ception of the poetical character was largely rationalized; and nowhere in his verse is this tendency more completely revealed than in *Hyperion*, in the *Eve of St. Agnes*, and in his odes and later sonnets.

Shortly before the composition of *Hyperion*, Keats—in writing to Woodhouse on one of his favorite themes, the negative character of the poet and the necessity of his identifying himself with the object of his contemplation—had insisted that it was not enough for the poet to relish merely the luxurious, but that people as well must receive the same sympathetic self-indication from the poet:

As to the poetical Character itself . . . it is not itself—it has no self—it is everything and nothing. It has no character—it enjoys light and shade; it lives in gusto, be it foul or fair, high or low, rich or poor, mean or elevated. It has as much delight in conceiving an Iago as an Imogen. . . . A Poet is the most unpoetical of anything in existence; because he has no Identity—he is continually in for—and filling some other Body—The Sun, the Moon, the Sea and Men and Women who are creatures of impulse are poetical and have about them an unchangeable attribute—the poet has none; no identity. . . . When I am in a room with people if ever I am free from speculating on creations of my own brain, then not myself goes home to myself: but the identity of every one in the room begins to press upon me [so] that I am in a very little time annihilated—not only among Men; it would be the same in a Nursery of children.<sup>1</sup>

The significance of such discussions, in Keats's letters, of the poetical character and of its aim and purpose is that they point to some change in what he considered as fit objects for the self-absorption of the poet. But they should be sharply distinguished from those lines of speculation which, increasingly manifest throughout the letters of the spring and especially the summer of 1819, resulted in repeated emphasis upon the necessity of the poet's awareness of suffering, and in questioning about the possible superiority of the philosopher to the poet. Keats's attention at this time was directed less to the abstract problem of the recognition of the sorrow and pain knit up in existence and the necessity of attempting to alleviate it than simply to the intensity inherent in the living beauty and reality of the

<sup>1</sup> Oct. 27, 1818, *Letters*, pp. 227–228. For Woodhouse's comment on this letter, see above, p. 6, n. 15.

"identities"<sup>2</sup> of the individual human beings or objects about him—of "the Sun, the Moon, the Sea and Men and Women." To return to that passage in Hazlitt's *Characters of Shakespear's Plays*, which, Keats noted in the margin, possessed "to a great degree of hieroglyphic visioning," it was a concern, in so far as human beings were its province, with "the ebb and flow of the feeling," with "the alternate contraction and dilatation of the soul,"<sup>3</sup> with all that might be said to constitute the "real self" of the particular being. This concern, when resulting in genuine imaginative comprehension and expression, was the "highest exertion" of poetical intensity and power:

If we compare the Passions to different tons and hogsheads of wine in a vast cellar—thus it is—the poet by one cup should know the scope of any particular wine without getting intoxicated—this is the highest exertion of Power, and the next step is to paint from memory of gone self-storms.<sup>4</sup>

"The excellence of every art," Keats had written in an early letter to his brothers, "is its intensity, capable of making all disagreeables evaporate from their being in close relationship with Beauty and Truth."<sup>5</sup> Even as early as *Endymion* he had

<sup>2</sup> Note, for example, Keats's distinctive and consistent use of the word "identity" in the *Letters* (esp. pp. 216, 227, 230, 247, and 336-337)—a word which, like several other critical terms, there is strong reason to think he took from Hazlitt's *Principles of Human Action* (cf. *Works*, ed. Howe, 1931-34, I, 36; cf. also I, 4, 19, 33, 37, and 40).

<sup>3</sup> See above, p. 5, n. 11.

<sup>4</sup> From Keats's copy of Hazlitt's *Characters of Shakespear's Plays* (now in the Harvard Keats Memorial Collection), p. 177; written by Keats below the passage, heavily sidemarked and underlined by him: "Four things have struck us in reading Lear. . . . 3. That the greatest strength of genius is shown in describing the strongest passions; for the power of the imagination, in works of invention, must be in proportion to the force of the natural impressions, which are the subject of them."

<sup>5</sup> Dec. 21, 1817, *Letters*, p. 71. "Truth" usually denotes, in the *Letters*, the joint "identity," character, reality, and beauty of a phenomenon. It cannot be acquired by "consecutive reasoning" (p. 68) or by deliberate search (p. 426); for, because of its identity with beauty (pp. 67, 163, and 259), the Imagination alone can conceive it (pp. 67 and 491; see the present writer's essay, *Negative Capability*, Harvard University Press, 1939, pp. 11-24). Cf. the use of the word in the same sense in Hunt's *Imagination and Fancy* (1852), p. 248: The line in the *Eve of St. Agnes*, "And the long carpets rose along the gusty floor," receives the comment, "This is a slip of the memory, for there were hardly carpets in those days. But the truth of the painting makes amends, as in the unchronological pictures of the old masters." Cf. also the word "reality" in the quotation Keats gives (*Letters*, p. 265) from Hazlitt's *Lectures on the English Comic Writers*, and on p. 71; cf. also "real," esp. p. 112.

insisted that the attainment of this "intensity" was gradual in nature, and that by degrees a higher, less sensuous intensity might be ultimately reached:

Wherein lies happiness? In that which beck  
Our ready minds to fellowship divine,  
A fellowship with essence; till we shine,  
Full alchemiz'd, and free of space (I, 777-780).

After a catalogue of the sensuous delights of nature and of poetry, progressively refined in character, Keats continues, in that passage which he called "a regular stepping of the Imagination towards a Truth":<sup>6</sup>

Feel we these things?—that moment have we stept  
Into a sort of oneness, and our state  
Is like a floating spirit's. But there are  
Richer entanglements, enthrallments far  
More self-destroying, leading, by degrees,  
To the chief intensity: the crown of these  
Is made of love and friendship, and sits high  
Upon the forehead of humanity (I, 795-802).

But however graduated this scale of intensity may be, even the "chief intensity"—a "richer entanglement"—is an experience which is almost cultivated, it would seem, for its own sake, with something of a deliberate Epicureanism; it is a state of highly refined sensuousness desirable in and for itself. Such a premium on "intensity" in one respect underlies the central theme of *Hyperion*. The new world of Apollo was a world of Beauty which, through successive stages of evolution, would supplant the old order. Keats had written to Haydon that *Hyperion* would treat of "the march of passion and endeavour";<sup>7</sup> and this is precisely what the poem attempts to do. The "new order," coming into being through

the eternal law  
That first in beauty should be first in might (II, 228-229),

is symbolized by Apollo, whose birth is a "dying into life," and of whom it has been well said that he surpasses "the unpoetic

<sup>6</sup> To Taylor, Jan. 30, 1818, *ibid.*, p. 91.

<sup>7</sup> Jan. 23, 1818, *ibid.*, p. 82.



order, the less-than-ideal of being, by his capacity for passionate experience."<sup>8</sup> Although it is certainly less egoistic than the

self-destroying, leading, by degrees,  
To the chief intensity,

which had comprized the goal of the poet's advancement in *Endymion*, and although Apollo's transition is one from ignorance to "knowledge enormous," it is significant that the ultimate state resulting from this triumphant "dying into life" is a comprehension of beauty and truth which is intensely and passionately felt.

"You might curb your magnanimity," Keats later wrote to Shelley, "and be more of an artist, and load every rift of your subject with ore."<sup>9</sup> Intensity, for Keats, was also the curbed and restrained life, force, and meaning of a particular. In the Shakespearean quatrain, which he enthusiastically copied out for Reynolds as containing a remarkable "*intensity* of working out conceits"—

When lofty trees I see barren of leaves  
Which erst from heat did canopy the herd,  
And Summer's green all girded up in sheaves,  
Borne on the bier with white and bristly beard

—in this quatrain, where Shakespeare "has left nothing to say about nothing or anything,"<sup>10</sup> there is an amassing and condensing together, with consummate beauty, of all that may be said of the actual meaning, identity, and indeed "truth" of autumn. For the "present," as Landor's Aesop declared, "like a note in music, is nothing but as it appertains to what is past and what is to come";<sup>11</sup> what is gone or has been removed is a part of the nature and truth of what is; deprivation is a character of its present being; and the very fact that a former purpose or function had been fulfilled or made manifest at a previous time is in a sense as much an integrated and indivisible aspect of the real self and peculiar identity of a phenomenon as what is now actively present. And a part of the reality, the distinctive being

<sup>8</sup> J. R. Caldwell, "The Meaning of *Hyperion*," *PMLA*, LI (1936), 1096.

<sup>9</sup> August, 1820, *Letters*, p. 507.

<sup>10</sup> Nov. 22, 1817, *ibid.*, p. 65.

<sup>11</sup> "Aesop and Rhodope," *Works* (ed. Welby, 1927-36), I, 15.

and nature of these "lofty trees" in this season, is not alone that they are now "barren of leaves" but that they at one time "from heat did canopy the herd"; and that this former function, this particular purpose and significance, by which the "lofty trees" were allied to other phenomena and through which their meaning and character were augmented and further vitalized, is now absent. Keats's praise of Edmund Kean as a Shakespearean actor was his "intense power of anatomizing the passion of every syllable"; there was "an indescribable gusto in his voice, by which we feel that the utterer is thinking of the past and the future, while speaking of the instant."<sup>12</sup>

Such intense condensation of the truth or essential individuality of a phenomenon or a situation might, in the extent of its connotation, apply to space as well as to time. "Milton in every instance," wrote Keats, in commenting upon *Paradise Lost*, VII, 420-423,

pursues his imagination to the utmost—he is "sagacious of his Quarry," he sees Beauty on the wing, pounces upon it and gorges it to the producing his essential verse. . . . But in no instance is this sort of perseverance more exemplified than in what may be called his *stationing or statuary*. He is not content with simple description, he must station,—thus here we not only see how the Birds "*with clang despised the ground,*" but we see them "*under a cloud in prospect.*" So we see Adam "Fair indeed and tall—*under a plantane*"—and so we see Satan "*disfigured—on the Assyrian Mount.*"<sup>13</sup>

This intensity, for Keats, was almost physically felt in both its creation and the response it evoked. It was the physical intensity of the phrase, "*sea-shouldering whales,*"<sup>14</sup> which gave the youthful Keats so much delight, enabling him to feel about his own shoulders the weight of the parting billows. Such an intensity is manifest in Shakespeare's description of the trembling withdrawal of a snail into its shell:

For look at Snails, you know what he says about Snails, you know where he talks about "cockled Snails"—well . . . this is in the Venus and Adonis: the Simile brought it to my Mind.

<sup>12</sup> "On Edmund Kean as a Shakespearean Actor," *Champion*, Dec. 21, 1817; reprinted in *Poetical Works and Other Writings* (ed. Forman, 1939), V, 230-231.

<sup>13</sup> Written in Keats's copy of *Paradise Lost*, *ibid.*, V, 303-304.

<sup>14</sup> See Charles and Mary Cowden Clarke, *Recollections of Writers* (1878), p. 126.

As the snail, whose tender horns being hit,  
Shrinks back into its shelly cave with pain. . . .<sup>15</sup>

Again, with a revelation of remarkable sympathetic insight, he annotated in his copy of *Paradise Lost* (IX, 179-191):

Satan having entered the Serpent, and inform'd his brutal sense—might seem sufficient—but Milton goes on "*but his sleep disturbed not.*" Whose spirit does not ache at the smothering and confinement—the unwilling stillness—the "*waiting close*"? Whose head is not dizzy at the possible speculations of Satan in the serpent prison? No passage of poetry ever can give a greater pain of suffocation.<sup>16</sup>

Intensity, Keats explained to Haydon, was

Somewhat like the feel I have of Anthony and Cleopatra, or of Alcibiades, leaning on his Crimson Couch, *his broad shoulders imperceptibly heaving with the Sea.*<sup>17</sup>

It may also be the instinctive and revealing working out of the electric fire in human nature tending to purify—so that among these human creature[s] there is continu[ally] some birth of new heroism. . . . May there not be superior beings amused with any graceful, though instinctive attitude my mind m[ay] fall into, as I am entertained with the alertness of a Stoat or the anxiety of a Deer? Though a quarrel in the streets is a thing to be hated, the energies displayed in it are fine; the commonest Man shows a grace in his quarrel—By a superior being our reasoning[s] may take the same tone—though erroneous they may be fine—*This is the very thing in which consists poetry.*<sup>18</sup>

<sup>15</sup> To Reynolds, Nov. 22, 1817, *Letters*, p. 65. Even while a school-boy at Enfield, according to Clarke, Keats dwelt upon the passage from *Cymbeline* (*Recollections of Writers*, p. 126, Clarke's italics):

'Till the diminution  
Of space had pointed him sharp as my needle;  
Nay, follow'd him till he had melted from  
The smallness of a gnat to air.

<sup>16</sup> *Works*, V, 305. Cf., also, Keats's annotation of *Paradise Lost*, III, 546-561: In Demons, fallen Angels, and Monsters the *delicacies of passion*, living in and from their immortality, is of the *most softening and dissolving nature*. It is carried to the utmost here—"Others more mild"—nothing can express the sensation one feels at "Their song was partial" etc. . . . Another instance is '*Pensive I sat alone.*' We need not mention '*Tears such as angels weep.*'" (*Ibid.*, V, 299-300.)

<sup>17</sup> April 8, 1818, *Letters*, p. 129.

<sup>18</sup> To George and Georgiana Keats, Feb. 14 to May 3, 1819, *ibid.*, pp. 316-317.

It was this manifest intensity, whether it be the "same animal eagerness" that underlies the "alertness of a Stout or the anxiety of a Deer," a "quarrel in the streets" or the trembling withdrawal of a snail into its shell; whether it be the miraculous working out of a Shakespearean conceit or of a Miltonic image; whether it be the "electric fire" at work within an Iago or an Imogen, or, even, the entire "march of passion and endeavour" of the "new order" of Beauty coming into being:—it was this impassioned intensity of meaning, this instinctive working towards a purpose, this elusive but potentially dynamic revelation of being and individuality, which was, for Keats, the simultaneous uniting and co-existence of Beauty and of Truth, and which can be grasped only by the sympathetic identification—at once impassioned and understanding—of the poet with the object of his contemplation.

Despite a few speculative passages in the letters of the spring of 1819 and even on occasions before, it may be doubted whether there is in the verse any marked or whole-hearted departure, before *Lamia*, from this valuing of "intensity" for its own sake. However finished and masterly may be the craftsmanship of the odes of April and May, 1819, when compared with the journeyman work of the 1817 volume and *Endymion* or even *Isabella*; however subtle and dignified may be their language, their structure, and their entire emotional temper and direction, they too are inspired by the same passionate but restrained striving for an almost physically felt intensity from which *Hyperion* and the *Eve of St. Agnes* had taken their origin and character. The stylistic nature of all of the verse written between the autumn of 1818 and the summer of the following year mirrors with close fidelity the development and expression of this distinctive bent of mind; the strands which compose it remain fundamentally the same, and differ only in the progressive richness and strength of their texture.

# I

## A "PRINCIPLE OF MELODY IN VERSE"

Keats's delight in the phonetic qualities of verse is so well known as hardly to need mention, but some instances of his expression of this delight may be recalled. "I looked upon fine

Phrases like a lover,"<sup>1</sup> he wrote to Bailey not long after the completion of the odes; and while revising *Hyperion* in September, 1819, he copied out for Woodhouse "a few lines . . . on account of a word in the last line of a fine sound"—the last line being "Though it blows *legend-laden* through the trees."<sup>2</sup> The "fluent Greek" in which the guests at Lamia's feast discoursed is described as a "vowel'd undersong." "Beautiful name, that *Magdalen!*"<sup>3</sup> he wrote to Reynolds, while foremost among his praises of Edmund Kean's acting was that "his tongue must seem to have robbed 'the Hybla bees, and left them honeyless,'" and that he possessed an "intense power of anatomizing the passion of every syllable."<sup>4</sup> Again, in Keats's marginal notes on *Paradise Lost*, the word "vales" (I, 321) bears the comment:

There is a cool pleasure in the very sound of vale. The English word is of the happiest chance. Milton has put vales in heaven and hell with the utter affection and yearning of a great poet.<sup>5</sup>

Benjamin Bailey informed Lord Houghton that

One of Keats's favorite topics of discourse was the principle of melody in verse, upon which he had his own motives, particularly in the management of open & close vowels. . . . Keats's theory was that the vowels should be so managed as not to clash with one another so as to mar the melody,—and yet they should be interchanged, like differing notes in music, to prevent monotony. . . . I well remember his telling me that, had he studied music, he had some notions of the combinations of sounds, by which he thought he could have done something as original as his poetry.<sup>6</sup>

The precise meaning of "open" and "close" vowels, in this suggestive passage, is difficult to ascertain. Bailey's marking of the opening lines of *Hyperion*, moreover, which he appends to his statements, is of little help. The only inference of reasonable certainty is that Bailey was not using the terms according to the strict phonetic usage of the present day. This inference is

<sup>1</sup> Aug. 14, 1819, *Letters*, p. 368.

<sup>2</sup> Sept. 21, 1819, *ibid.*, p. 388.

<sup>3</sup> Mar. 14, 1818, *ibid.*, p. 115.

<sup>4</sup> "On Edmund Kean as a Shakespearean Actor," *Champion*, Dec. 21, 1817, reprinted in *Poetical Works and Other Writings*, above, V, 229 and 231.

<sup>5</sup> *Poetical Works and Other Writings*, V, 295.

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further borne out, it would seem, by the lack of any particular patterning of vowels in even the maturest verse of Keats when analyzed according to the modern phonetic terms of "open" and "close."

Professor Cabell Greet, whose expert knowledge of phonetics has greatly helped me, informs me that the term "open," as loosely used by Bailey, was possibly equivalent to the diphthongs of "day" [ei], "go" [ou], "fly" [ai], "how" [au], "boy" [oi], "here" [iə], "there" [eə], "four" [ɔə], and "tour" [uə], and to the historically "long" vowels of "see" [i:], "father" [a:], "saw" [ɔ:], "too" [u:], and "bird" [ɜ:]. In a similar way, the term "close" would possibly refer to the historically "short" vowels of "it" [i], "get" [e], "cat" [æ], "hot" [ɔ], "molest" [o], "put" [u], "up" [ʌ], and "china" [ə].<sup>7</sup>

If this conjecture is assumed, it is possible to detect a rather unusual and even frequent interplay of vowels in the verse which Keats wrote between the autumn of 1818 and the following May. Thus, allowing *a* to represent here and subsequently the diphthongs and historically "long" vowels which Bailey possibly meant by "open," and *b* to signify historically "short" vowels, one may sometimes find strict alteration, with the former variety of vowels taking the accent, as in

( *b a b a b a* )

And purple-stained mouth (*Nightingale*, 18).

[ə] [ə:] [i] [ei] [ə] [au]

( *b a b a b a b a b a* )

Away! away! for I will fly to thee (*Ib.*, 31).

[ə] [ei] [ə] [ei] [ɔ] [ai] [i] [ai] [u] [i:]

<sup>7</sup> The key-words employed are those of Daniel Jones. The pronunciation involved in the following discussion is the received pronunciation of Keats's day. Unless there is reason to suppose otherwise, I have proceeded as though this were identical with the received British pronunciation of the present-day as it is recorded by Daniel Jones. For the concern is less with the exact phonetic quality of the English vowels of the early nineteenth century than with their potential division into groups which have presumably preserved the same relations to each other. Words such as "to," "my," and "by" have been bracketed in either group according to the stress they receive in the scansion of the line. I have rather arbitrarily classed the syllabic "l" and "n" as a weak or historically "short" vowel.

( a b / b a b a b a b a )<sup>8</sup>

Though winning near the goal—yet, do not grieve (*Urn*, 18).

[ou] [i] [i] [iə] [ə] [ou] [e] [u:] [ɔ] [i:]

One may occasionally note a tendency to use an increasing number of diphthongs or historically "long" vowels as the line progresses, as when Keats alters the line, "With silver taper's light and gentle care" (*St. Agn.*, xxii, 5) to

( b b / b a b a b a b a )

With silver taper's light, and pious care;

[i] [i] [ə] [ei] [ə] [ai] [ə] [ai] [ə] [æ]

or as in

( b b / a a / b a b a b a )

And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core

[ə] [i] [ɔ:] [u:] [i] [ai] [i] [u:] [ə] [ɔ:]

( b b / b a b a b a b a )

Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn (*Autumn*, 6, 27).

[e] [i] [ə] [ei] [u] [ai] [ə] [ɔ:] [æ] [ɔ:]

This occasional tendency to give way to diphthongs and historically "long" vowels, as the line continues, is occasionally carried far enough to result in a kind of balance of a straight series of historically "short" vowels in the first half line and an alternate series in the second:

( b b b b b / a b a b a )

Sudden from heaven like a weeping cloud (*Melancholy*, 12).

[ʌ] [ə] [ɔ] [e] [ə] [ai] [ə] [i:] [i] [au]

( b b b b b / a b a b a )

Or emptied some dull opiate to the drains (*Nightingale*, 3).<sup>9</sup>

[o] [e] [i] [ʌ] [ʌ] [ou] [ji] [u:] [ə] [ei]

<sup>8</sup> Here and later I have set off groups of vowels by dividing marks. This is of course not done to emphasize the possible existence of a deliberate pattern, but merely to facilitate a quick perception of the rough form the alteration takes.

<sup>9</sup> The reverse, however, may be found on rare occasions, as in

( b a b a b a / b b b b )

[Arise—arise! the morning is at hand (*St. Agn.*, xxxix, 3).

[ə] [ai] [ə] [ai] [ə] [ɔ:] [i] [i] [ə] [æ]



As might be expected, vowels appear far more frequently in groups than in simple alternation. These groups have rarely any marked irregularity. But one can find enough instances of exact duplication of groups to give tentative illustration to Keats's belief that the interplay of vowels should be "like differing notes in music." Characteristic would be:

( a a / b b b a / b b b a )

All garlanded with carven imag'ries<sup>10</sup>  
[ɔ:] [a:] [ə] [ə] [i] [a:] [ə] [i] [i] [i:]

( b a / b b b a / b b b a )

Innum'able of stains and splendid dyes (*St. Agn.*, xxiv, 2, 5).  
[i] [u:] [ə] [i] [ə] [ei] [ə] [e] [i] [ai]

( b b b a / b b b a / b a )

Of haggard seeming, but a boon indeed (xxxix, 2).  
[ə] [æ] [ə] [i:] [i] [ʌ] [ə] [u:] [i] [i:]

( a b b / a b b / a b b / a )

Cool'd a long age in the deep-delvèd earth  
[u:] [ə] [ɔ] [ei] [i] [ə] [i:] [e] [ə] [ə:]

( b a / b b b a / b b b a )

What thou among the leaves hast never known  
[ɔ] [au] [ə] [ʌ] [ə] [i:] [ə] [e] [ə] [ou]

( b b a / b b a / b a b a )

Still wouldst thou sing, and I have ears in vain (*Nightingale*, 12, 22, 59).  
[i] [u] [au] [i] [ə] [ai] [ə] [iə] [i] [ei]

Instances are found, indeed, in which this duplication of groups is almost balanced throughout the line:

( a b b / a b / a b b / a a )

Thou foster-child of silence and slow time  
[au] [ɔ] [ə] [ai] [ə] [ai] [ə] [æ] [ou] [ai]

<sup>10</sup> So considered, since it is a rhyme-syllable, instead of as the relaxed "i."

( a b b a / a / a b b a / b )

She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss  
[i:] [æ] [ɔ] [ei] [ou] [au] [ə] [ɔ] [ai] [i]

( a / a b b b / a b b b / a )

Lead'st thou that heifer lowing at the skies (*Urn*, 2, 19, 33).  
[i:] [au] [æ] [e][ə] [ou][i] [ə] [ə] [ai]

Two other, far less common, examples of groups may be noted. One can at times detect an almost regularly increasing use of historically "short" vowels in a quiet or somber line. Thus Keats alters "As is the wing of evening tiger-moths" (b b b b a b a b b) to the more felicitous

( b / a b / a b b / a b b b )

As are the tiger-moth's deep-damask'd wings (*St. Agn.*, xxiv, 6).  
[ə][a:] [ə][ai][ə] [ɔ] [i:] [æ][ə] [i]

There is also a rare appearance of groups in a somewhat anti-thetic balance:

( b a b b b / a b a a a )

What leaf-fring'd legend haunts about thy shape (*Urn*, 5).  
[ɔ] [i:] [i] [e][ə] [ɔ:] [ə][au] [ai] [ei]

( b a a a b / a b b b a )

Can burst Joy's grape against his palate fine (*Mel.*, 28).  
[ə] [ə:] [ɔi] [ei] [ə][ei] [i] [æ][i] [ai]

( a b b a b / a b a a b )

Turning to poison while the bee-mouth sips (*Ib.*, 24).  
[ə:] [i] [u] [ɔi] [n] [ai] [ə] [i:] [au] [i]

( b b b a b / a a a b a )

Fled is that music:—Do I wake or sleep (*Nightingale*, 80).  
[e] [i] [æ] [u:] [i] [u:] [ai] [ei] [ɔ] [i:]

Kinds of grouping naturally vary a good deal within a stanza or series of lines. Alternate lines, however, often contain a pre-dominance of a certain kind of vowel, while in the lines they

flank the opposite kind predominates. There are also instances in which two or three lines even parallel each other with some closeness, as in

( b b a a b a b b b a  
 b b a a b a b a b a  
 b b a b a a b b b a )

With a sweet kernel; to set budding more

[i] [ə] [i:] [ə:] [l] [u:] [e] [ʌ] [i] [ɔ:]

And still more, later flowers for the bees,

[ə] [i] [ɔ:] [ei][ə] [au][ə] [ɔ:] [ə] [i:]

Until they think warm days will never cease (*Aut.*, 8-10).

[ə] [i] [ei] [i] [ɔ:] [ei] [i] [e][ə] [i:]

More significant, however, than this possibly half-conscious patterning of what Bailey called "open" and "close" vowels is the use of assonance in *Hyperion*, the later sonnets, the *Eve of St. Agnes*, and the odes—a use intricate enough to justify, perhaps, Saintsbury's assertion that constant and deliberate employment of assonance in English verse dates from Keats.<sup>11</sup> From Bailey's discussion of Keats's theory of vowel-interplay, Keats himself seems to have laid chief stress on assonance. Bailey quotes the opening lines of *Hyperion*, and states that Keats's theory was largely illustrated by "the vowel sounds repeated in the words—'Sāt grey-haired Sātūrn'—and 'fōrest on fōrest'—[and in] 'like clōūd on clōūd.'"

In the verse which he wrote before *Hyperion*, occasional interplay of similar vowels can be found.<sup>12</sup> It is usually simple, and without definite pattern:

Which bards in fealty to Apollo hold (*Chapman's Homer*, 4)

Similarly, Keats, in the manuscript, changed

<sup>11</sup> *History of English Prosody* (2nd ed., 1923), I, 418.

<sup>12</sup> As will be noted in the examples given here and later, assonance, for the practical purposes of this section, is simply taken to denote an exact correspondence of vowels or diphthongs, and may thus occasionally include an internal rhyme. Correspondences created by the use of the "schwa" vowel [ə], as in "the" or "above," have been disregarded. Certain licenses, however, have been indulged in: I have equated [ju:], as in "beauty," with [u:], as in "move"; and the unstressed "and" and "for" have been given normally stressed phonetic value—[æ] and [ɔ:]—when they comprise the opening word of a line.

Round every spot where touch'd Apollo's feet (*End.*, I, 790)

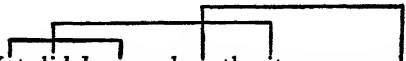
to

Round every *spot* where *trod* Apollo's feet.

It is occasionally consecutive, as when Keats altered

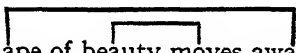
Yet could I never judge what Men could mean (*Chapman's Homer*, 7)  
to read

Yet did I never breathe its pure serene;

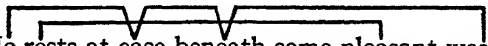


or as in

Some shape of beauty moves away the pall (*End.*, I, 12).



He rests at ease beneath some pleasant weed (*On the Grasshopper and Cricket*, 8).



Examples such as these are few in the early verse; nor are they indeed either frequent or particularly subtle in the verse written after June, 1819, when Keats supplanted many of his stylistic devices with others radically different in character. But the verse written between the autumn of 1818 and the end of June, 1819—*Hyperion*, the *Eve of St. Agnes*, the odes, and many of the sonnets—is replete with assonantal patterns of an intricate sort.

It should be emphasized that Keats's employment of assonance is not only consistently more distinctive in arrangement but is perhaps even more extensive in amount than is usually found in English verse. Although there have, of course, been other poets in English who have often used assonance—notably Shakespeare, Milton, Coleridge, Shelley, and, after Keats, Poe, Tennyson, Lanier, and Swinburne—these poets, as a rule, have

employed it both less and in a relatively simpler form. One is perhaps inclined to expect more assonance in Swinburne than is actually the case, and, in turning back to the lines most cleverly contrived for phonetic effect, one often finds that they depend more upon alliteration. When Swinburne employs assonance, moreover, he in general simply repeats the same vowel once or more, as in

Pale, without name or number,

Pale, beyond porch and portal (*Garden of Proserpine*, 33, 49).

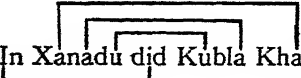
His use of assonance is rarely more complicated than

Waked up by snow-soft sudden rains at eve (*Ave atque Vale*, 6)



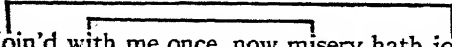
Moreover, as in Poe, who also relies more upon alliteration, much of Swinburne's assonance arises merely from the repetition of the same word. Campion, Shelley, and Lanier reveal an inclination for assonance, but they use it less often and intricately than Swinburne. It is rather liberally present in Coleridge's verse, particularly in *Christabel*; but it shows little unusual grouping of any kind except, as Mr. Robert Hillyer has pointed out, in the notable reworking of Purchas's phrase to

In Xanadu did Kubla Khan.



A somewhat consistently more elaborate use of vowel-repetition is found in Milton, as in

Join'd with me once, now misery hath join'd (*P.L.*, I, 90).



Rocks, caves, lakes, fens, bogs, dens, and shades of death (*II*, 621).



Tennyson also reveals a somewhat complicated interplay of similar vowels about as often as Milton. The complication is rarely more extreme, however, than

Slow-dropping veils of thinnest lawn, did go;

They saw the gleaming river seaward flow.

How sweet it were, hearing the downward stream (*Lotus-Eaters*,  
11, 14, 99).

Patterning of vowels is found even more often in Shakespeare's sonnets, as in

With beauty's treasure, ere it be self-killed (vi, 4).

Shifts but his place, for still the world enjoys it (ix, 10).

From this vile world, wi. vilest worms to dwell (lxxi, 4).

Keats, however, employs assonance to a much more marked degree in *Hyperion*, the *Eve of St. Agnes*, and the odes. Perhaps about half of the lines of his maturer verse contain some variety of simple assonance—the repetition once or more, that is, of a single vowel.<sup>13</sup> This assonance is often balanced, as when Keats altered "awake for sinners' souls" to

<sup>13</sup> *Hyp.*, I, 1-100: 51% (1, 5, 8, 11-12, 14-15, 17-26, 30, 32-34, 36-37, 40-41, 43, 45, 47, 49, 53, 58, 61, 68-70, 72, 74-76, 78, 83, 85-86, 89-90, 92, 95-96, 98-100). *St. Agn.*, 1-100: 45% (2-3, 5, 6-10, 15, 19, 25-26, 29, 31-32, 35-38, 41, 44-48, 50, 52, 55, 57-61, 63-65, 68, 70-71, 80, 83-84, 89, 92, 99). In many of these instances, the repeated vowels are perhaps too little stressed to justify the strict designation of assonance.

And all night kept awake for sinners' sake to grieve (*St. Agn.*, iii, 9).  
or as in

Asia, born of most enormous Caf (*Hyp.*, II, 53).

Repetition of a single vowel may sometimes run throughout the line:

Along the margin-sand large footmarks went (I, 15).

Why do I know ye? Why have I seen ye? Why (I, 231).

Yet let me tell my sorrow, let me tell (II, 259).

She sigh'd for Agnes' dreams, the sweetest of the year (*St. Agn.*, viii, 9).

Perhaps a tenth of the lines of these poems, moreover, contain a somewhat more complicated assonance, which ensues from the repetition of two or more vowels.<sup>14</sup> The repetition occasionally comes in consecutive pairs or threes:

And still she slept an azure-lidded sleep (xxx, 1).

Already with thee! tender is the night (*Nightingale*, 35).

I cannot see what flowers are at my feet (41).

To toll me back from thee to my sole self (82).

When Madeline, St. Agnes' charmèd maid (*St. Agn.*, xxii, 3).

<sup>14</sup> *Hyp.*, I, 1-100: 16% (2, 4, 6, 9-10, 13, 29, 38, 42, 62, 71, 77, 84, 88, 94, 97).  
*St. Agn.*, 1-100: 12% (16, 30, 40, 43, 53, 74-75, 77, 81-82, 97-98).

And on her silver cross soft amethyst (xxv, 5).

Who hath forsaken old and sacred thrones (*Hyp.*, III, 77).

Not to the sensual ear, but more endear'd (*Urn*, 13).

Nor let the beetle, nor the death-moth be (*Mel.*, 6).

O why did ye not melt, and leave my sense (*Indol.*, 19).

Again, Keats altered the line

Why should I tell thee what thou so well know'st (*Hyp.*, III, 84).  
to

Why should I tell thee what thou so well see'st.

And he supplanted

Sun's inlet to severe magnificence (I, 211)

with



That inlet to severe magnificence.

Such consecutive assonance is often accompanied by other vowel-linkage:

Cannot I form? Cannot I fashion forth (I, 142).

Thick night confounds the pine-tops with the clouds (II, 60).

And in the line,

And bid old Saturn *seize* his throne again (I, 250),

'seize' was replaced by 'take,' with the result:

And bid old Saturn take his throne again.

More frequent than these varieties of consecutive vowel-repetition is a kind of loose interlacing of vowels, as in

Sweet-shaped lightnings from the nadir deep (*Hyp.*, I, 276).

Pale vox I, and in vapours hid my face (I, 326).

O Titans, shall I say "Arise!"—Ye groan (II, 157).

And they beheld while still Hyperion's name (II, 347).

There those four shouted forth old Saturn's name (II, 387).

And I will flit into it with my lyre (III, 101).

But no—already had his deathbell rung (*St. Agn.*, iii, 4).

He ventures in: let no buzz'd whisper tell (x, 1).

And grasp'd his fingers in her palsied hand (xi, 7).

Saying, "Mercy, Porphyro! hie thee from this place" (xi, 8).

A shielded scutcheon blush'd with blood of queens and kings (xxiv, 9).

Save wings for heaven:—Porphyro grew faint (xxv, 8).

And yet the Evening listens. He who saddens (*What the Thrush Said*,  
12).

By nightshade, ruby grape of Proserpine (*Mel.*, 4).

Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard (*Urn*, 11).

A third time pass'd they by, and, passing, turn'd (*Indolence*, 31).

Patterning of vowel-repetition may vary considerably within a few lines. Thus, in the sonnet *To Homer* alone there are:

Standing aloof in giant ignorance,

Of thee I hear, and of the Cyclades (1-2).

"Spermy tent" is altered to "spummy tent," giving

And Neptune made for thee a spummy tent,

There *is* a budding morrow *in* midnight,

Such seeing hadst thou, as it once befel (7, 11, 13).

There are occasional instances, however, in which the patterning of similar vowels extends into two lines or more, as, for example:

The wakeful bloodhound rose and shook his hide, But his sagacious eye an inmate owns (*St. Agn.*, xli, 5-6).

And diamonded with panes of quaint device, Innum'rabable of stains and splendid dyes (*xxiv.* 4-5).

Or I will, even in a moment's space, Awake with horrid shout my foemen's ears (*xvii.* 7-8).

And still she slept an azure-lidded sleep, In blanched linen smooth and lavender'd (*xx.* 1-2).

Saying, "Mercy, Porphyro! hie thee from this place: They are all here tonight, the whole bloodthirsty race" (*x.* 8-9)

Despite Bailey's account of Keats's theory that ("the principle of melody in verse" consisted in the interplay of vowels "like differing notes in music," there is an obvious danger in over-emphasizing any very conscious intention behind the vowel-grouping which has been in part described.) Yet it should be reasserted that this sort of interplay of vowels is not a really common phenomenon in English verse, even in the verse of poets who have striven specifically for phonetic effect and little else. It should also be re-emphasized that any similar patterning is so rare in the verse which Keats wrote before *Hyperion* as to necessitate painstaking and deliberate search for its discovery; and that it is also infrequent in the verse written after May, 1819, when Keats appeared to have ceased striving for the rich and weighted intensity of expression which had until that time been both a conscious and unconscious goal.

## 2

## HYPERION

Some months before beginning *Hyperion*, Keats had written to Haydon: "In *Endymion* I think you may have many bits of the deep and sentimental cast—the nature of *Hyperion* will lead me to treat it in a more naked and Grecian Manner—and the march of passion and endeavour will be undeviating."<sup>1</sup> The form Keats selected as a part of the "more naked and Grecian Manner" of this poem, which was begun in the autumn of 1818, was the unrhymed iambic pentameter, or blank verse, which had been finally established as the English epic measure by Milton. During the eighteenth century, it had been far more extensively drawn upon for non-dramatic verse than ever before, and with the close of that century was rising in popularity and esteem. As a model for the writing of the blank verse of *Hyperion*, Keats turned chiefly to Milton, whose influence had probably left no subsequent non-dramatic blank verse completely untouched. But side by side with whatever stylistic and prosodic devices—alien or congenial to his own bent of mind—which Keats adapted from Milton, there are none the less other qualities of structure and versification eminently his own, by the use of which he attempted to attain the simultaneous intensity and restraint of expression upon which he was now placing the highest premium.

It was earlier suggested that possibly a part of the weighted tempo of the maturer verse of Keats is owing to its comparative lack of Latinity and polysyllabic words;<sup>2</sup> that although a Latinized vocabulary, as in the case particularly of Milton, may add sonority, it does not often retard the flow of movement; and that, with *Isabella*, Keats diminished his use of these words, however unconsciously, and began to substitute, as became increasingly common with him until after the writing of the odes, words far shorter, more native in origin, and more strongly consonantal in texture. This substitution is somewhat continued in *Hyperion*, and a comparison of its opening lines with those of *Endymion* will at once illustrate the change which

<sup>1</sup> Jan. 23, 1818, *Letters*, p. 82.

<sup>2</sup> See above, pp. 30-32.

has been made. The diction of *Endymion* is relatively polysyllabic, less consonantal, and softer in phonetic character:

A thing of beauty is a joy forever:  
 Its loveliness increases; it will never  
 Pass into nothingness; but still will keep  
 A bower quiet for us, and a sleep  
 Full of sweet dreams, and health, and quiet breathing.  
 Therefore on every morrow are we wreathing  
 A flowery band to bind us to the earth,  
 Spite of despondence, of the inhuman dearth  
 Of noble natures, of the gloomy days,  
 Of all the unhealthy and o'er-darkened ways  
 Made for our searching . . .

That of *Hyperion* is short, frequently monosyllabic, more native in stock, stronger in phonetic and consonantal body:

Deep in the shady sadness of a vale  
 Far sunken from the healthy breath of morn,  
 Far from the fiery noon, and eve's one star,  
 Sat gray-hair'd Saturn, quiet as a stone,  
 Still as the silence round about his lair;  
 Forest on forest hung above his head  
 Like cloud on cloud. No stir of air was there,  
 Not so much life as on a summer's day  
 Robs not one light seed from the feather'd grass,  
 But where the dead leaf fell, there did it rest.<sup>3</sup>

Examples have likewise been given of the extent to which, in seeking to attain greater strength and severity of style, Keats, like many increasingly maturing poets, had cut the adjective and drawn more heavily upon the verb. In *Hyperion*, however, there is a slight reversion to the adjective (14.4%),<sup>4</sup> probably as a result of Keats's attempt to imitate fully the several

<sup>3</sup> Although, under the influence of Milton's Latinized vocabulary, the Latinity of *Hyperion* is in general somewhat higher than the amount to which it had been diminished in *Isabella*—13.9% (381) as compared to 12.2%—it is still a drop from *Endymion* (15%); and although, again under the influence of Milton, words of two syllables or more are somewhat more frequent than in *Isabella*—24.7% (677) as compared to 22.3%—and words of three syllables or more very slightly greater in number 5.7% (157) as compared to 5.6%—they, too, represent a drop from *Endymion* (27.1% and 6.9%). All percentages of words in *Hyperion* are taken from Book I as a unit and figured against the total number of words (2735) in Book I.

<sup>4</sup> (393). Cf. *End.*, I: 16%; and *Isab.* 13.5%.

Miltonic peculiarities in the placing of the epithet. There is a more appreciable momentary reversion in *Hyperion* in the decline of the verb (12.2%<sup>5</sup> as compared to 15% in *Isabella*); but this is now more than made up for by the very frequent employment of the passive participle as adjective:

Was with its *storèd* thunder labouring up.

As when upon a *trancèd* summer night,  
Those *green-rob'd* senators of mighty woods,  
Tall oaks, *branch-charmèd* by the earnest stars.

*Bastion'd* with pyramids of glowing gold,  
And *touch'd* with shade of *bronzèd* obelisks (I, 211, 72-74, 177-178).<sup>6</sup>

It is also compensated for by Keats's adoption of the device, common in Milton and commended by Augustan critics, of giving strength and impetus to the line by beginning it with a verb:

*Leaning* with parted lips, some words she spake

*Rumbles* reluctant o'er our fallen house

*Dream*, and so dream all night without a stir

*Look up*, and let me see our doom in it;

*Look up*, and tell me if this feeble shape (I, 47, 61, 75, 97-98).<sup>7</sup>

Stress has already been laid upon the extent to which, in *Isabella*, Keats attempted to rid his verse of its former structural laxity, as well as upon his adaptation of rhetorical devices, from Fairfax and others, by means of which he sought to attain increased emphasis and tightness of sentence-flow and line. Probably this same desire—the attempt now to “treat” his

<sup>5</sup> (335).

<sup>6</sup> Such epithets rise from 9.7% (55) of the adjectives in *Isabella* (554) to 19% (76) of those in *Hyperion*, Book I (393).

<sup>7</sup> Such lines had not been much used in the couplets of the 1817 volume: in the epistles *To Mathew*, *To George Keats*, and *To Charles Cowden Clarke*, they total 9.2% (34). They received increasing use, however, in *Endymion*—12.3% (122; figured from Book I)—and later in *Isabella*—15% (76). In *Hyperion* they further rose to 17.5% (155)—a frequency close to the 18.5% (344) of the first two books of *Paradise Lost*.

subject "in a more naked and Grecian Manner"—led him in the composition of *Hyperion* to draw upon patterns of sentence, clausal, and phrasal structure largely peculiar to Milton. Because of the perspicacity and thoroughness of De Selincourt's analysis<sup>8</sup> of this aspect of Keats's imitation of Milton—an analysis justly well known and often drawn upon in subsequent studies of Keats—no attempt is made here to delineate and describe the nature and extent of Milton's rhetorical influence on *Hyperion*. It is perhaps enough to say, once again, that adjectives are found in place of the noun, as in "barren void" (I, 119); and that there is a frequent use of the adjective in place of the adverb:

A stream went *voiceless* by . . .

Shook *horrid* with such aspen malady . . .

Crept *gradual*, from the feet unto the crown . . .

And plung'd all *noiseless* into the deep night (I, 11, 93, 260, 357).

Instances are occasionally found of the qualifying or additional subsidiary clause which De Selincourt designated as a rhetorical "redundancy":

I am smother'd up,  
And buried from all godlike exercise  
Of influence benign on planets pale,  
Of admonitions to the winds and seas,  
Of peaceful sway above man's harvesting (I, 106-110).

I am gone  
Away from my own bosom: I have left  
My strong identity, my real self (I, 112-114).

Open thine eyes eterne, and sphere them round  
Upon all space: space starr'd, and lorn of light;  
Space region'd with life-air; and barren void;  
Spaces of fire, and all the yawn of hell (I, 117-120).

Now lost, save what we find on remnants huge  
Of stone, or marble swart, their import gone,  
Their wisdom long since fled (I, 281-283).

<sup>8</sup> See his edition of Keats (3rd ed., 1912), pp. 489-493).



Ellipsis is also found:

Still sat, still snuff'd the incense, teeming up  
From man to the sun's God; yet *unsecure* (I, 167-168).

Miltonic repetition—rather different in nature from the repetition adopted from Fairfax and from others in *Isabella*, and different as well from the peculiar Shakespearean repetition found in Keats's later sonnets—is likewise common in *Hyperion*:

. . . while sometimes eagle's wings,  
Unseen before by Gods or wondering men,  
Darken'd the place; and neighing steeds were heard,  
Not heard before by Gods or wondering men (I, 182-185).

He enter'd, but he enter'd full of wrath (I, 213)

Divine ye were created, and divine  
In sad demeanour . . . (I, 329-330)

My life is but the life of winds and tides,  
No more than winds and tides can I avail (I, 341-342)

Lifted his curvèd lids, and kept them wide  
Until it ceas'd; and still he kept them wide (I, 351-352)

Crag jutting forth to crag, and rocks that seem'd  
Ever as if just rising from a sleep,  
Forehead to forehead held their monstrous horns (II, 10-12)

Perhaps the most marked of these peculiarities are the "Miltonic inversions" with which, as Keats later thought, even the revised *Hyperion* was disfigured.<sup>9</sup> Instances in which the noun is followed by the adjective are very plentiful:

For as among us mortals *omens drear*.

Oft made Hyperion ache. His *palace bright*.

Savour of poisonous brass and *metal sick*.

And *palpations sweet* and *pleasures soft* (I, 169, 176, 189, 315).

<sup>9</sup> "I have given up *Hyperion*—there were too many Miltonic inversions in it," Sept. 21, 1819 (to Reynolds), *Letters*, p. 384. See also the letter to George and Georgiana Keats, Sept. 17-27, 1819, *ibid.*, p. 425.

A total of sixty-two such inversions are present in *Hyperion*,<sup>10</sup> or an average of about one in every fourteen lines, a figure drastically diminished in the revised *Hyperion* of the following year. Keats also secures inversion, again following Milton, by placing the verb before the noun:

Pale wox I, and in vapours hid my face.

There saw she direst strife . . .

Thus grew it up . . . (I, 326; II, 92, 129).

This inversion of noun and verb, almost entirely eliminated in the recast, occurs seventeen times, or an average of about once in every fifty-two lines.

To these patterns of phrase, clause, and sentence, caught from Milton, may be added the ellipsis of the preposition in the infinitive, as in "made quake" (I, 146); the listing of more than one adjective after the noun, as in

His old right hand lay nerveless, listless, dead,  
Unseptr'd (I, 18-19)

or in

And at the fruits thereof what shapes they be,  
Distinct, and visible (I, 315-326);

and the coupling of two substantives, the second of which continues on, after extreme enjambment, to the close of the second line:

Crag jutting forth to crag, and rocks that seem'd  
Ever as if just rising from a sleep (II, 10-1).

Couches of rugged stone, and slaty ridge  
Stubborn'd with iron (II, 16-17).

Not far hence Atlas; and beside him prone  
Phorcus, the sire of Gorgons (II, 73-74).

<sup>10</sup> I exclude, of course, predicate adjectives, or adjectives whose presence in a following modifying clause is normal in English sentence order.

There is the triptology of noun, epithet, or simply phrase, which one finds in Milton but which was far more frequent in eighteenth-century verse;

Sad sign of ruin, sudden dismay, and fall! (I, 336).

So leant she, not so fair, upon a tusk (II, 62).

Now tiger-passion'd, lion-thoughted, wroth (II, 68).

Miltonic asyndeton, moreover, is occasionally found:

Next Cottus: prone he lay, chin uppermost,  
As though in pain (II, 49-50).

'Titans, behold your God!' at which some groan'd;  
Some started on their feet; some also shouted;  
Some wept, some wail'd, all bow'd with reverence (II, 110-112).

The influence of Milton, however, is apparent in a manner which is somewhat subtler and more penetrating than rhetorical similarities, and which may more strictly be designated as prosodic. It will be remembered how Keats, despite the example of William Browne and other Elizabethans, had closely followed Hunt in the placing of the *cæsura*, and how he had consequently tended, against almost all English prosodic tradition, to place the *cæsura* after the center of the line, and, in particular, after a weak or feminine syllable:

Its loveliness increases; it will never . . .

Emphasis was laid upon the extent to which, in *Isabella*, Keats made a radical effort to depart from this practice—a practice the inevitable effect of which is laxity and languor. He attempted to place the pause earlier in the line and after a strong or masculine syllable, and consequently, like the majority of English pentameter writers, showed a preference for the post-fourth-syllable pause (29.2%).<sup>11</sup> In *Hyperion*, Keats carried even farther the orthodox English practice of employing a masculine *cæsura*, and the extent of his use of this pause (59.9%)<sup>12</sup> compares with

<sup>11</sup> See above, p. 34.

<sup>12</sup> (214); from Book I.

that of Milton (58.1%),<sup>13</sup> and is even slightly above it. It should be noted, however, that, in contrast to the practice newly established in *Isabella* and also to the placing of pause in almost all of Keats's verse written after *Hyperion*, the most frequent position of the cæsure in this poem is not after the fourth but after the sixth syllable.

Now unlike his Elizabethan predecessors and his Augustan successors, Milton himself had preferred the sixth-syllable cæsure:

Of that forbidden tree, (x) whose mortal taste  
Brought death into the world, (x) and all our woe,

That with no middle flight (x) intends to soar  
Above th' Aonian mount, (x) while it pursues  
Things unattempted yet (x) in prose or rhyme.

Prosodic theory, particularly in the eighteenth century,<sup>14</sup> had long implied that there is a natural tendency to read or pronounce the latter part of the line in about the same length of time as the first; that if the cæsure, therefore, came after the center of the line—after the sixth, seventh, or eighth syllables, that is—the line was somewhat lengthened in time of reading. Since it was considered preferable to place the cæsure after an accented syllable (the second, fourth, sixth, or eighth), and since the eighth-syllable pause was too far from the center of the line to admit any just balance or interplay of line-halves, it was held that, when a slow line was wanted, the cæsure should generally be placed after the sixth syllable. A line with this pause possessed an "air of gravity and solemnity,"<sup>15</sup> and Johnson, for example, who liked a "full and solemn close," "could never read [a line containing the sixth-syllable cæsure] without some strong emotion."<sup>16</sup> It is not improbable that, in thus drawing upon the sixth-syllable pause rather than the traditional fourth, Milton was simply adhering to a tradition, already beginning and especially strong in the following century; for

<sup>13</sup> (612); from *Paradise Lost*, I, 1-241; IV, 1-247; VIII, 1-318; XII, 1-248.

<sup>14</sup> Augustan theories concerning the relative effects of various positions for the cæsure are discussed in Appendix G, pp. 203-209.

<sup>15</sup> Lord Kames, *Elements of Criticism* (1762), II, 426. Cf. also Hugh Blair's *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles-Lettres* (2nd ed., 1785), III, 107-108.

<sup>16</sup> *Rambler*, No. 90.

perhaps more than any previous English poet, he consistently desired a slow, solemn, and majestic line.

Keats, then, had made a strong attempt in *Isabella* to adopt the traditional fourth-syllable pause, and to break from the over-varied cæsural placing of Hunt and above all from the Huntian vice of placing the pause late in the line and after a weak syllable.<sup>17</sup> Although he continued in this attempt after the writing of *Hyperion*, it is significant that he now followed Milton in giving preference to the sixth-syllable pause:

But where the dead leaf fell, (x) there did it rest.  
A stream went voiceless by, (x) still deaden'd more (I, 10-11).

Had stood a pigmy's height: (x) she would have ta'en  
Achilles by the hair (x) and bent his back (I, 28-29).

Sorrow more beautiful (x) than Beauty's self.  
There was a listening fear (x) in her regard,  
As if calamity (x) had but begun;  
As if the vanward clouds (x) of evil days (I, 36-39).

As in Milton, the order of preference for the cæsural syllable is: sixth, fourth, fifth, seventh, third, with the second and eighth syllables about equal in frequency. The extent, moreover, to which the precise distribution of pause in *Hyperion* agrees with that in *Paradise Lost* is almost as close as the agreement between that in Hunt's sonnets and couplets and in the early Keats:

<i>Hyperion I</i>			<i>Paradise Lost</i> <sup>18</sup>		
After syllable No.:			After syllable No.:		
2:	2.5%	(9)	2:	3.8%	(41)
3:	4.2%	(15)	3:	6.1%	(65)
4:	26.3%	(93)	4:	23.4%	(246)
5:	16.8%	(60)	5:	15.9%	(167)
6:	29%	(104)	6:	27.1%	(281)
7:	14.5%	(53)	7:	13%	(137)
8:	2.2%	(8)	8:	4.1%	(44)
Double or triple cæsura: 4% (14)			6.8% (72)		

<sup>17</sup> See above, pp. 15 and 27, for the discussion of Hunt's cæsural placing.

<sup>18</sup> Figured from four books throughout the poem, which total, individually: I, 1-241: 2nd: 3.7% (9); 3rd: 5.8% (14); 4th: 24.4% (59); 5th: 17.8% (43); 6th:

The peculiar effect of paragraphing in *Paradise Lost*—its "slow, planetary wheelings," in De Quincey's phrase—is owing in no small part to the frequency with which Milton employs medial full-stops<sup>19</sup>—complete stops, that is to say, somewhere within the body of the line rather than at its conclusion; and the length of these stops is increased by the frequency with which they conclude on an accented syllable:

this the seat

That we must change for Heav'n, this mournful gloom  
For that celestial light? (xx) Be it so, since he (*P.L.* I, 243-245).

Sings darkling, and in shadiest covert hid  
Tunes her nocturnal note. (xx) Thus with the year (*III*, 38-40).

Such medial full-stops are found at every hand in *Hyperion*; and they, too, conclude on an accented syllable, as in

Forest on forest hung above his head  
Like cloud on cloud. (xx) No stir of air was there (*I*, 6-7)

By reason of his fallen divinity  
Spreading a shade: (xx) The Naiad 'mid her reeds (*I*, 12-13).

Voices of soft proclaim, and silver stir  
Of strings in hollow shells; (xx) and there shall be (*I*, 130-131).

A total of 40% of the full-stops in *Paradise Lost* are medial;<sup>20</sup> in *Hyperion* they are even more frequently so (50%).<sup>21</sup> There is some difference in length of medial full-stops after an accented or unaccented syllable:

From over-strained might. (xx) Releas'd, he fled (*I*, 263).

And eyes at horrid working. (x) Nearest him (*II*, 52).

27.4% (66); 7th: 13.2% (31); 8th: 3.3% (8); double or triple cæsuras: 4.5% (11).  
*IV*, 1-247: 2nd: 3.6% (9); 3rd: 5.2% (13); 4th: 27.9% (69); 5th: 14.5% (36); 6th: 29.9% (74); 7th: 9.7% (23); 8th: 4% (10); double or triple cæsuras: 5.2% (13).  
*VIII*, 1-318: 2nd: 4.4% (13); 3rd: 7.5% (24); 4th: 19.6% (63); 5th: 14.4% (46); 6th: 25.1% (80); 7th: 14.1% (45); 8th: 4.4% (14); double or triple cæsuras: 9.7% (31).  
*XII*, 1-248: 2nd: 3.6% (9); 3rd: 6.4% (15); 4th: 22.1% (55); 5th: 16.9% (42); 6th: 24.6% (61); 7th: 15% (37); 8th: 4.8% (12); double or triple cæsuras: 6.8% (17).

<sup>19</sup> A full-stop, here and subsequently, is considered as being any stop which necessitates some stronger mark of punctuation than a comma.

<sup>20</sup> T. H. Banks, "A Study of the Relation of Full Stops to the Rhythm of *Paradise Lost*," *PMLA*, XLII, 140.

<sup>21</sup> (153).

Milton's medial full-stops are usually very marked, and occur after a stressed syllable (70%).<sup>22</sup> In *Hyperion*, they are not much less frequent (64.7%).<sup>23</sup>

Again as in *Paradise Lost*,<sup>24</sup> medial full-stops, like the cæsure generally, appear chiefly after the fourth and sixth syllables in *Hyperion* (50.9%),<sup>25</sup> especially after the sixth. In contrast to the revision of a year later, and as in *Paradise Lost*, these stops, when not on the fourth or sixth syllable, are usually on the fifth or seventh (24.8%).<sup>26</sup>

Stubborn'd with iron. (x) All were not assembled (II, 17).

And made their dove-wings tremble. (x) On he flared (I, 217).

As in

Next Cottus: (x) prone he lay, chin uppermost (II, 49)

or in

"Where is another Chaos? Where?"—(x) That word (I, 145)

few medial full-stops occur outside of the fourth to seventh syllable limit (15.6%).<sup>27</sup>

The technical influence of Milton is apparent in other ways in Keats's attempt to secure greater restraint and integrity of structure. Hiatus—found, it will be remembered, in a fifth of the lines in the couplets of the 1817 volume, and diminished successively to 17.3% in *Endymion* and 12.3% in *Isabella*—is still present; but it occurs now in only 11.7%<sup>28</sup> of the lines—a percentage not much above that of Milton (10.3%).<sup>29</sup> The feminine ending, moreover, with which the couplets of the

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 141.

<sup>23</sup> (99).

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 142.

<sup>25</sup> (80).

<sup>26</sup> (41).

<sup>27</sup> (24).

<sup>28</sup> (42); figured from Book I.

<sup>29</sup> (25); figured from *Paradise Lost*, I, 1–241. Though appreciably greater than that of Pope, Milton's sparing use of hiatus was often commended by even the strictest of eighteenth-century critics. See, for example, the approving statement of Johnson (*Rambler*, No. 88). Yet it should be noted that vowel-gaping tends to increase somewhat throughout *Paradise Lost*; and in Book XII (1–248) reaches 12.9% (32).

1817 volume had been replete (24%), which had been radically excised in *Endymion* (5½%) and later even more in *Isabella* (2.9%), and which is almost non-existent in the more serious verse written after *Hyperion* until after the conclusion of *Lamia*, is here further diminished to 1.9% (17). Like the feminine ending in *Paradise Lost*, it consists entirely of a concluding weak syllable of a word:

Like natural sculpture in cathedral cav/ern (I, 86).

I know the covert, for thence came I hith/er (I, 152).

There is sad feud among ye, and rebell/ion (I, 321).

Stubborn'd with iron. All were not assemb/led (II, 17).

It is never, as was common in Elizabethan dramatic blank verse, an unstressed final pronoun:

This letter's not so soil'd but you may read/it (*Otho the Great*, II, ii, 54).

Although in Milton's early blank verse feminine endings are abundant (in *Comus*, for example, they total 9%),<sup>30</sup> and although, after *Paradise Lost*, they rose again to 3.3% in *Paradise Regained* and much farther to 17% in the non-lyrical pentameters of *Samson Agonistes*, Milton had rigidly avoided the feminine ending in *Paradise Lost* (.9%)—a percentage scarcely above that of Surrey's *Aeneid* (.6%). It is probable that the example of *Paradise Lost* may have encouraged Keats's drastic excision, already begun, of the feminine ending in *Hyperion*.

In Elizabethan dramatic blank verse, there is a frequent appearance of the unstressed ending—a line, that is, the last foot of which is not a genuine iamb but either a pyrrhic or at best an iamb with only an intermediate accent on the second syllable:

v c

Horatio says 'tis but our fant / asy (*Hamlet*, I, i, 23).

Unstressed endings, indeed, are common in all English pentameter, rhymed or unrhymed, from Marlowe until Dryden. Milton,

<sup>30</sup> This and other figures on Milton's use of the feminine ending are taken from J. C. Smith, "Feminine Endings in Milton's Blank Verse," *TLS*, Dec. 5, 1936, p. 1016.



however, had used it rather sparingly: there are probably not more than 4.2% such lines in *Paradise Lost*.<sup>31</sup> Far rarer use of the unstressed ending was probably made in the following century. The number in Blair's *Grave* (2%) seems about average for Augustan blank verse, and may be even a little high.<sup>32</sup> The unstressed ending returned somewhat in the non-dramatic blank verse of the Romantic poets: it is possibly at its lowest as employed by Landor in *Gebir* (4%) and at its highest in Shelley's *Alastor* (10%). The frequency in the *Prelude*, I and II (7%), is probably about average. Now Keats's use of the unstressed ending, as in

~ ~

Of their petty Ocean. Oftener, heav / ily (*End.*, I, 884),  
or in

~ ~

Of weary days, made deeper ex / quisite (I, 911), .

had likewise been free; it had even risen from 7.5% in *Endymion* to 8.9% in *Isabella*. These percentages are high when it is remembered that the unstressed ending was traditionally less used in rhymed than in blank verse. An appreciable drop may consequently be said to have been made in *Hyperion*, in which the unstressed ending (5.3%) is perhaps below that of Romantic blank verse generally and not much above that of Milton (4.2%).

Accompanying this drop in *Hyperion* of unstressed endings is the diminution, also indicative of growing discipline and even more extensive, of the opening pyrrhic foot which, almost since the first introduction of the pentameter into English, had been traditionally viewed as a possible weakening of the line. It has already been said that initial stress-failure was prevalent in Keats's early verse. Instances of the unstressed opening are still present in *Hyperion*:

~ ~

Or with / a finger stay'd Ixion's wheel (I, 30):

~ ~

As if / calamity had but begun;

<sup>31</sup> Averaged from four books: I: 4.9% (39); IV: 2.4% (28); VIII: 5% (33); XII: 4.9% (31).

<sup>32</sup> I have noted, for example, only 14 unstressed endings in Cowper's *Task* (.3%), and have been unable to discover any at all in Akenside's *Pleasures of Imagination*.

As if / the vanward clouds of evil days (I, 38-39).

And in / her bearing was a sort of hope (I, 148).

Or the / familiar visiting of one (I, 172).

This initial stress-failure, however, which had dropped from 10.7% in the *Epistle to Mathew* to 8% in *Endymion* and later to 6.7% in *Isabella*, appears now in only 2.6% (23) of the lines of *Hyperion*—a percentage almost exactly that of *Paradise Lost* (2.5%).<sup>33</sup> In those instances, moreover, where it appears in *Hyperion*, the opening pyrrhic foot is often balanced, as it had been in *Paradise Lost*, by a spondee. In accordance with contemporary prosodic theory,<sup>34</sup> this balance is usually brought about by placing the spondee in the second foot:

Of the / sky-chil / dren; I / will give / command (I, 133).

Who on / wide plains / gather / in pant / ing troops (I, 199).

To the / most hate / ful see / ing of / itself (II, 370).

Balance is less often secured by placing the double stress in the fifth foot:

And to / envis / age cir / cumstance, / all calm (II, 204).

And their / etern / al calm / and all / that face (III, 60).

The balancing spondee may still more rarely appear in the third foot:

Which is / its own / great judge / and search / er out (II, 130).

And in / the proof / much com / fort will / I give (II, 179).

<sup>33</sup> (79); figured from four books: I: 2.5% (20); IV: 2.1% (22); VIII: 2.6% (18); XII: 2.9% (19).

<sup>34</sup> See, for example, John Carey, *Practical English Prosody and Versification* (1816), pp. 40-41.

It is on a very few occasions found in the fourth foot:

<sup>˘</sup> <sup>˘</sup> <sup>˘</sup> <sup>˘</sup> <sup>˘</sup> <sup>˘</sup> <sup>˘</sup> <sup>˘</sup>  
*That it / enforc'd / me to / bid sad / farewell* (II, 238).

But in the adaptation of technical devices for securing that highly disciplined and restrained intensity of expression for which, at this time, Keats so arduously strove, there are instances in which he either entirely avoided the example of Milton, or followed his lead with caution and moderation, or went far beyond him.

An accompaniment of Milton's paragraphing and his preference for medial full-stopping was a partiality for the broken line—the line, that is to say, in which the flow is broken in varying degree by some form of punctuation. In the first ten lines of *Paradise Lost*, for example, only one line is unbroken:

Of man's first disobedience, and the fruit  
 Of that forbidden tree, whose mortal taste  
 Brought death into the world, and all our woe,  
 With loss of Eden, till one greater Man  
 Restore us, and regain the blissful seat,  
 Sing, Heav'nly Muse, that on the secret top  
 Of Oreb, or of Sinai, didst inspire  
 The shepherd, who first taught the chosen seed,  
*In the beginning how the Heav'ns and earth*  
 Rose out of Chaos: or if Sion Hill . . .

A total of only 29% of the lines of *Paradise Lost* are unbroken; except in Akenside, Cowper, and the Elizabethan blank verse of Robert Blair, it is questionable whether the use of the unbroken line rose much even in eighteenth-century blank verse, and it seems doubtful that it returned in anything like general practice during the whole of the nineteenth century. It is consequently of some interest that, despite his abundant employment of the Miltonic medial full-stop, Keats none the less carefully avoided the broken line. Thus, for example, while only one of the first ten lines of *Paradise Lost* is unbroken, six appear in the first ten lines of *Hyperion*:

Deep in the shady sadness of a vale  
 Far sunken from the healthy breath of morn,  
 Far from the fiery noon, and eve's one star,  
 Sat gray-hair'd Saturn, quiet as a stone,

Still as the silence round about his lair;  
 Forest on forest hung above his head  
 Like cloud on cloud. Not stir of air was there,  
 Not so much life as on a summer's day  
 Robs not one light seed from the feather'd grass,  
 But where the dead leaf fell, there did it rest.

The frequency of unbroken lines in *Hyperion*—43.4% (384)—is, as far as I know, unequalled except by Surrey in English blank verse.

Just as he sought to attain greater structural integrity of line by avoiding the Miltonic line-break, and by attempting, indeed, the precise opposite, Keats likewise avoided the run-on line—as he had already begun to do in the *ottava rima* stanzas of *Isabella* and as he was increasingly to continue to do as his verse matured. The run-on line had been an integral part of English blank verse since Milton. Although it is rarely as frequent in subsequent blank verse as in *Paradise Lost* (59%), I should hazard the guess that, with the exception of a few blank verse writers of the eighteenth-century such as Blair (25%),<sup>35</sup> Young, and Thomson, it does not amount to much below 50%. It is probably at least this much in most nineteenth-century blank verse. Run-on lines in the *Prelude* and the *Excursion*, for example, total, I believe, almost exactly 50%; they reached the level of 58% in Shelley's *Alastor*; and even in Tennyson's blank verse, which, like that of most of the Victorians, is fairly restrained, they amount to about 44.1%.<sup>36</sup> Keats, however, since he began *Isabella*, had been careful of the extreme enjambment he had earlier used, and he reduced run-on lines in *Hyperion* to only 34%. Except for Surrey's *Aeneid*, Gascoigne's *Steele Glas*, and the works of two or three of the early eighteenth-century writers of blank verse, I question whether in any other English blank verse poem of length the run-on line is as little present as in *Hyperion*. There are a few exceptions, such as:

Glow'd through, and wrought upon the muffing dark  
 Sweet-shaped lightnings from the nadir deep  
 Up to the zenith,—hieroglyphics old  
 Which sages and keen-eyed astrologers  
 Then living on the earth, with labouring thought  
 Won from the gaze of many centuries (I, 275-280),

\* From the *Grave*.

\* Figured from *Tithonus*, *Ulysses*, and *Lucretius*.

As a rule, however, Keats never has more than two, or at most three, run-on lines together, while it is by no means uncommon in *Paradise Lost* to find passages of from fifteen to twenty consecutive run-on lines.

Just as, in this attempt to secure greater structural integrity of line, Keats deliberately avoided the broken and run-on line of Milton and indeed strove to achieve precisely the opposite in *Hyperion*, so, with a similar end, he adapted from Milton other metrical devices, but considerably moderated Milton's use of them. It will be remembered that, owing in part to the example of Hunt and of Chapman, Keats had often employed the trisyllabic foot in his early lyrics and couplets. His use of it in *Hyperion* is even slightly more prevalent (2.8%)<sup>37</sup>—although he was later to employ it much less; and the increase is unquestionably the result of the influence of Milton (3.8%).<sup>38</sup> But the frequency of trisyllabic feet in *Hyperion* is by no means even comparable to that in *Paradise Lost*, where, if the numerous marked elisions be counted, the total is 7.3%.<sup>39</sup> It seems plain that, despite the example of Milton, Keats sought to avoid over-frequent use of this metrical variation which, for well over a century, had been traditionally regarded as a device for increasing the speed of the line; for it was a majestic and a leisurely tempo of movement which Keats desired. Unlike Milton, moreover, and unlike Chapman, Browne, Hunt, and his own early self as well, Keats in *Hyperion* reveals even more the eighteenth-century tendency—already apparent in *Isabella*, increasingly manifest after *Hyperion*, and completely carried out in *Lamia*—to employ such trisyllabic feet as, when elision is possible, may be elided by synaeresis (41.9%)<sup>40</sup>—

$\begin{array}{cccccccccccccccc} \sim & \sim & \sim & \sim & \sim & \sim & \sim & \sim & \sim & \sim & \sim & \sim & \sim & \sim & \sim & \sim & \sim & \sim \\ \text{Blown by} & / & \text{the} & \text{ser} & / & \text{i} & \text{ous} & \text{Zeph} & / & \text{yrs,} & \text{gave} & / & \text{of} & \text{sweet} & \text{(I, 207)—} \end{array}$

rather than predominantly by syncope (48.6%):<sup>41</sup>

$\begin{array}{cccccccccccccccc} \sim & \sim & \sim & \sim & \sim & \sim & \sim & \sim & \sim & \sim & \sim & \sim & \sim & \sim & \sim & \sim & \sim & \sim \\ \text{The} & \text{quav} & / & \text{er} & \text{ing} & \text{thun} & / & \text{der} & \text{there} & / & \text{upon} & / & \text{had} & \text{ceas'd} & \text{(I, 225).} \end{array}$

<sup>37</sup> (74); figured from I, and II, 1-172.

<sup>38</sup> (47); from *Paradise Lost*, I, 1-241.

<sup>39</sup> (89).

<sup>40</sup> (31); figured against the total number of trisyllabic feet (74). Cf. *End.*: 24%.

<sup>41</sup> (36); cf. *End.*: 64%.

And very sparing use indeed (1.3%)<sup>42</sup> is made of trisyllabic feet elidable by the frequent Miltonic device of apocope, as in

To the east / ern gates, / and full / six dew / y hours (I, 264).

Actual trisyllabic feet, again, such as

As thou / canst move / about, / an ev / ident God (I, 338)

or

The first- / born of / all shap'd / and palp / able Gods (II, 153),

where no legitimate means of elision is present, are rather infrequent (6.7%)<sup>43</sup> as compared to 12% in *Endymion*). The manuscript revisions of *Hyperion* show a constant effort to avoid such unelidable trisyllabic feet. Thus, for example,

And still / they all / were the same / bright pat / ient stars (I, 253)

became

And still / they were / the same / bright pat / ient stars.

The word "next," at once superfluous and trisyllabic in its context, was deleted in

Phorcus, / the sire / of Gor / gons. Next, neigh / bour'd close (II, 74).

The line

And like / a rose / in tint / and in ver / meil shape (I, 209)

was changed to

And like / a rose / in ver / meil tint / and shape.

<sup>42</sup> (1); cf. *Paradise Lost*, I, 1-241, where trisyllabic feet elidable by apocope are 10.6% (5) of the whole (89), and where, if the trisyllabic feet marked as elidable be included, the total is 19.7% (17).

<sup>43</sup> (5).

Or

He might / not ev / en though / a *primev* / al God (I, 292)

was altered to read

He might / not:—No, / though a / *primev* / al God.

Again, in order to achieve a continuity of vowel-similarity and, at the same time, avoid an unelidable trisyllabic foot, the line

Those sil / ver wings / of *the sun* / were full / outspread (I, 296)

was replaced with

Those sil / ver wings / expand / ed sist / erly.

Largely owing to the influence of Milton there was a temporary retardation in *Hyperion* of Keats's attempt—already shown in *Isabella* and almost completely carried out in the *Eve of St. Agnes* and the odes—to secure greater metrical discipline and integrity by decreasing medial inversion of accent and replacing it, to some extent, by initial inversion. Like the majority of youthful poets, Keats, in his very earliest verse, had adhered closely to the theoretical scansion of the line. In the poems of the 1817 volume, however, under the influence of Hunt and Chapman, he strove deliberately for accentual freedom; and it may be reiterated that there, as in *Endymion* afterwards, he made rather copious use of the medially inverted foot while neglecting the traditional Augustan device of initial inversion. He had begun avoiding medial inversion in *Isabella* (1.2%); but with the example of Milton before him (1.5%)<sup>44</sup> a slight rise ensued (1.3%)<sup>45</sup>—although the rise is hardly a return to *Endymion* (1.7%). In keeping with his policy to adopt only

<sup>44</sup> (74); figured from *Paradise Lost*: I, 1-241: 1.5% (19); IV, 1-247: 1.7% (21); VIII, 1-318: 1.2% (20); XII, 1-248: 1.1% (14).

<sup>45</sup> (27); figured from Book I.

with moderation the medially inverted feet relatively common in Milton, Keats occasionally made specific attempts to eradicate it, as when, in the line

Ev(e)n here, / into<sup>46</sup> / my old / sanctu / ary (I, 243),

both the unstressed ending and the medially inverted fourth foot are replaced by a concluding iamb and a conventional medial pyrrhic:

Ev(e)n here, / into / my cent / er of / repose.

The favorite Miltonic device, moreover, of employing medial inversion after a full stop—

With vain / attempt. / Him the / Almighty / y Power (P.L., I, 44)—

is in only rare instances found in *Hyperion*, as in:

In men / who die.— / This is / the grief, / O Son! (I, 335),

The reb / el three. / Thea / was start / ed up (I, 147).

A medially inverted foot, however, is used on some occasions after a slighter stop:

He might / not:—No, / though a / primev / al God (I, 292).

Stay'd in / their birth, / even / as here / 'tis told (I, 295).

It may be added, finally, that the rise in *Hyperion* of the initially inverted foot—

Then with / a slow incline of his broad breast,

Like to / a diver in the pearly seas,

Forward / he stoop'd over the airy shore (I, 354–356)—

<sup>46</sup> See below, Appendix E, p. 201, n. 35.



to 4%<sup>47</sup> from 3.3% in *Isabella* can hardly have owed much to the precedent of Milton (3.4%),<sup>48</sup> who alone among the major English blank verse writers somewhat neglected it, relying upon an extreme number of run-on lines as his chief means of avoiding monotony; but that this rise is an indication of a general inclination throughout Keats's entire technical development to return gradually, in a degree surpassing most of his contemporaries, to the skeletal integrity of the Augustan line.

Accompanying this growing tendency to use only traditionally legitimate variation, and to secure a consequent gain in restraint of expression and discipline of structure, was the employment also of prosodic devices, metrical or phonetic, which might weight the richness and retard the flow of the line. For to an extent possibly unparalleled in English versification, Keats began in *Hyperion*—a practice which he was subsequently to carry much farther—to draw upon spondaic feet and intensified, sonorous, and prolonged vowels.

I have dwelt at some length upon Keats's attempt, in the verse written after *Isabella* and before *Lamia*, to make use of various kinds of vowel-patterning.<sup>49</sup> But, entirely apart from such matters as that of pattern and design, notice should be taken of the extent to which, in the autumn of 1818, Keats began to employ diphthongs and historically "long" vowels.<sup>50</sup> The manuscript revisions of *Hyperion* give frequent indications of Keats's attempt—still more apparent later, in the *Eve of St. Agnes*—to weight the euphony of his lines by substituting such vowels for others which are less sonorous. For example,

And thus all night without a stir they rest (I, 75)

was altered to

Dream, and so dream all night without a stir.

In the alteration from

And touch'd with chequer black of obelisks (I, 178)

<sup>47</sup> (72); Book I.

<sup>48</sup> (182); figured from *Paradise Lost*, I-241: 3.4% (42); IV, 1-247: 3.3% (41); VIII, 1-318: 3.4% (55); XII, 1-248: 3.5% (44).

<sup>49</sup> See above, pp. 50-65.

<sup>50</sup> See above p. 52.

to

And touch'd with shade of bronzed obelisks,

the gain in inevitability of phrase and image is accompanied by the addition of a more sonorous vowel. A similar gain ensues in the transition from

Spun round in *blackest* curtaining of clouds (I, 271)

to

Spun round in *sable* curtaining of clouds,

and from

Not therefore dusk, dim quite, blindfold, and hid (I, 272)

to

Not therefore *veiled* quite, blindfold, and hid.

"Muffling black" (I, 275) became "muffling *dark*"; and sonority of vowels is augmented as much as is lucidity of expression in the replacement of

Made sweet-shap'd lightnings: Wings this splendent orb (I, 276)

with

Sweet-shap'd lightnings from the *nadir* deep.

"*Kept* eclipse" (I, 280) was changed to "*maintained* eclipse"; "Its *venom* in the eyes" (II, 48) became "Its *poison* in the eyes"; and "mournful *spot*" (II, 103) was replaced with "mournful *house*."

In order to present some sort of mean against which Keats's progress in the use of these vowels might be roughly illustrated, typical passages were analyzed from four other poets—Milton, Dryden, Byron, and Shelley—all of whom possessed at least some partiality for vowels of this sort. The mean of *accented* historically "long" vowels and diphthongs amounted to about 22.5%.<sup>51</sup> An analysis of characteristic passages of Keats's verse

<sup>51</sup> In a typical passage of *Paradise Lost* (VIII, 1-65), 20.9% (or 136) vowels were accented and of the historically "long" variety. In a selection from Dryden's *Fables (Cock and the Fox, 1-54)*, they amount to 21.8% (118 out of 540). Despite its sonority, a characteristic passage of Byron's *Childe Harold* (III, stanzas lxxiii to lxxviii) yielded a total of only 20.6% (114 out of 554). Such vowels are quite frequent in Shelley's *Ode to the West Wind*, especially towards its close: they amount

confirms the general impression one has of his progressive use of sonorous vowels. In a typical sonnet of the 1817 volume, they are somewhat below the average found for the other poets; those in *Endymion* are scarcely more; in *Isabella* and especially later in *Hyperion*, the frequency is increasingly above the average, and anticipates the even greater abundance of historically "long" vowels in the *Eve of St. Agnes* and in some of the odes.<sup>52</sup>

Until after the conclusion of the odes of April and May, 1819, Keats reveals a consistent tendency to decrease the unstressed, or pyrrhic, feet which, in his earlier verse, appear at least once in every line, as in

Full in / the mid / dle of / this pleas / antness

There stood / a mar / ble alt / ar, with / a tress

Of flow / ers budd / ed new / ly; and / the dew

Had tak / en fair / y phant / asies / to strew (*End.*, I, 89-92).

There is already a marked indication in *Hyperion* of this decrease of stress-failure, which was first begun in *Isabella*: it drops from 13% in *Endymion* to 12.8% in *Isabella* and then to 10.3%<sup>53</sup> in *Hyperion*. The place of the pyrrhic foot, with its inevitable result of rapidity of flow, is gradually usurped by the spondee.

For the number of accented sonorous vowels in *Hyperion* is often increased and the weight of the line emphasized by an abundant use of spondaic feet. Spondees are found in every part of the line. They occur very often in the first foot:

to 26.2% (or 190 out of 721). By "accented" I refer to vowels of the historically "long" kind which receive at least intermediate accentuation in ordinary speech, whether or not the theoretical accent of the meter is on them. The relaxed "i," when it receives a slight stress, has been considered as a "long" vowel, just as it is traditionally considered in English rhyme.

<sup>52</sup> <i>On the Grasshopper and the Cricket</i> :	18.1% (26)
<i>Endymion</i> , I, 1-89:	19.5% (178)
<i>Isabella</i> , 1-88:	23.5% (207)
<i>Hyperion</i> , I, 1-71:	25.8% (181)

<sup>53</sup> (184); figured from Book I. Cf. *Paradise Lost*, I, 1-241: 9.7% (117).

*Fall!*—*No*, / by Tell / us and / her brin / y robes (I, 246).

*Held* *strug* / gle with / his throat / but came / not forth (I, 252).

*Glow'd* *through* / and wrought / upon / the muff / ling dark (I, 275).

They occur less frequently in the second foot—

Of the / *sky-child* / ren; I / will give / command (I, 133)—

and in the third:

And list / en'd in / *sharp pain* / for Sat / urn's voice (I, 163).

They are very frequent, however, in the fourth—

To make / me des / olate? / *whence came* / the strength?

How was / it nurt / ur'd to / *such burst* / ing forth? (I, 103-4)—

and in the fifth foot:

Then, as / was wont, / his pal / ace-door / *flew ope* (I, 205).

This crad / le of / my glor / y, this / *soft clime* (I, 236).

Lines containing two spondees are by no means uncommon:

While his / *bow'd head* / *seem'd list* / 'ning to / the earth (I, 20).

*Space* *reg* / ion'd with / *life-air*; / and barr / en void (I, 119).

Not only is a more specific depiction of image attained, but the substitution for an iamb of a weighted spondee, or at least a strong hovering accent, is gained in the replacement of

The oaks, / *branch-charm* / èd by / the earn / est stars (I, 74)

with

Tall oaks, / branch-charm / èd by / the earn / est stars.

In the line immediately following it, a similar change is made from

And thus / all night / without / a stir / they rest

to

Dream, and / so dream / all night / without / a stir.

And by an exhibition of conscious skill or by some happy intuition, the insertion of two weighted and balancing spondees together with the antithetical employment in the six heavy syllables of historically "long" and "short" vowels, unfolding from the center:—these combine, with an effect almost pictorial in the suggestion by sound, in the transformation of

Upon / the ver / y point / of wing / èd time (II, 1)

to

Just at / the self- / b same a beat / of Time's / a wide b wings.<sup>54</sup>

The frequency of the spondaic foot is perhaps the most distinctive single prosodic peculiarity of Keats's maturer verse. It is possibly a safe assertion that the average appearance of the spondee, and of strong hovering accents, is in about 2% of the feet in English verse. Thus, a rather sonorous passage of *Childe Harold* has perhaps a typical total of 1.8%,<sup>55</sup> while Milton, who sought an exceptionally strong-bodied line, attains a frequency as high as 5.1%.<sup>56</sup> Keats starts at a little more than average, shows a slight increase in *Endymion*, a doubling in *Isabella*, and a further doubling in *Hyperion*:

<sup>54</sup> Allowing, once again, *b* to represent a "short" and *a* a "long" vowel.

<sup>55</sup> Canto IV, stanzas CLXX to CLXXXVI: 14 out of the 782 feet are spondaic.

<sup>56</sup> (269); figured from *Paradise Lost*, I, 1-241: 6.3% (76); IV, 1-247: 4.8% (60); VIII, 1-318: 4.4% (71); XII, 1-248: 5% (62).

Sonnets of the 1817 volume:	2.1%
<i>Endymion</i> , I, 1-241:	2.6%
<i>Isabella</i> , 1-160:	5%
<i>Hyperion</i> , I:	11.7% <sup>57</sup>

The entire stylistic tendency throughout *Hyperion* is at once in the direction of intensity and restraint. Such rhetorical and prosodic devices as Keats had already drawn upon in *Isabella*, in order to gain the discipline and structural coherence so completely lacking in his earlier verse, were again employed in *Hyperion*. But the hand which manipulated them was surer and more skillful in its touch. Much, in addition, was gained from Milton; but often in those instances where Milton had notoriously deserted disciplinary measures which had been common in English verse, Keats carefully avoided his methods and abided by stricter orthodoxy than almost any of his own contemporaries. While he sought structural firmness and integrity, Keats simultaneously began to employ whatever stylistic means would burden even further the connotative intensity and richness of imagery with which his lines are fraught. The progress towards the one was an intricate accompaniment of that towards the other, and the contribution of each was one of mutual augmentation and support.

## 3

## THE EVE OF ST. AGNES

Before he had wholly completed his working over of the fragment of *Hyperion*, Keats, in the latter part of January and early in February, 1819, made his second attempt in the writing of the short metrical romances which Hunt had wanted to establish as an English literary *genre*. As in *Isabella*, Keats chose to compose his romance in stanzaic form. But instead of employing, as he had in *Isabella*, the *ottava rima* stanza, which, with its unbroken alternate-rhyming and its almost separate concluding couplet, was so eminently adapted for satire or burlesque, Keats now decided to write the *Eve of St. Agnes* in the Spenserian stanza—a stanza less hurriedly epigrammatic, more richly varied in rhyme and metrical pattern, and more leisurely and majestic

<sup>57</sup> Sonnets of the 1817 volume: 52 (out of 2468 feet); *End.*, I, 1-241: 31 (out of 1155 feet); *Isab.*, 1-160: 43 (out of 800 feet); *Hyp.*, I: 214 (out of 1785 feet).

in its pace. He retained some of the devices with which he had first sought, in *Isabella*, to attain an increased tightness of structure, and he also kept much of what he had learned from Milton and drawn upon in *Hyperion*. In his management of this stanza, he further added patterns of line and of stanzaic structure gleaned from Spenser and from the Spenserian imitators of the eighteenth century. Superimposed, however, upon all that he gained from other writers were phrasal, phonetic, and metrical peculiarities which were largely distinctive to Keats himself. Yet that which was drawn from external impetus or suggestion, and that which was created by his own instinctive or conscious craftsmanship, are both similar in the need and purpose which led to their adoption and directed their use: they are together manifestations of Keats's craving for a completeness of expression and presentation—a completeness at once extremely dynamic in its intensity and at the same time strengthened and restrained by a classical rigor and a staid severity of prosody and of structural pattern.

Emphasis was earlier laid upon the extent to which a Latinized vocabulary, however potentially resonant, often tends by the very length of words and by the relative paucity of consonants to facilitate rather than hinder the flow of line. It was also illustrated that, with *Isabella*, Latinity was diminished to 12.2%, and that in *Hyperion*, although the use of a partially Miltonic diction raised it a bit (13.9%), the amount of Latinity was still somewhat less than it had been in *Endymion*. The Latinity of the *Eve of St. Agnes* is again lowered (12.3%),<sup>1</sup> however unconsciously, to approximately what it had been in *Isabella*, and it forecasts a continual lowering which does not cease until after the composition of the odes.

It may be mentioned that the diction of the *Eve of St. Agnes* is not only increasingly monosyllabic and stronger in phonetic, especially consonantal, body, but that it also reveals, even more than *Hyperion*, a growing syntactical discipline. The adverb, so prominent in Keats's early verse, is even lower than it had been in *Hyperion* (5.6%<sup>2</sup> as compared to 6.3%). The word "very,"

<sup>1</sup> (354); figured from the total number of words in the *Eve of St. Agnes* (2852). All other percentages of diction in the poem are figured against this total (2852). See above, pp. 30-32.

<sup>2</sup> (170).

in particular, which had abounded in the early couplets—

The air was cooling, and so *very* still ("I stood tiptoe," 2)—  
is used only twice (x, 6; xiv, 8), and even then as an adjective instead of an adverb. The exclamatory "O"—

O sovereign power of love! O grief! O balm! (*End.*, II, 1)—

which had appeared with unpleasant frequency in the early couplets, and which, even as late as *Hyperion*, is found 34 times or once in every 26 lines, is now used only three times (xiii, 7; xvii, 2; xxix, 5). As is generally true in all the verse written after *Endymion*, there is a tendency to employ the verb more fully.<sup>3</sup> Keats seems to have made a conscious attempt in the revisions, moreover, to substitute more descriptive and sometimes more directly active verbs where possible. Thus, he altered

*Tottering* along with ivory-headed wand (xi, 2)  
to

*Shuffling* along with ivory-headed wand,

and "in truth it doth amaze" (xiv, 5) to "it *fills* me with amaze." "Falls light down by her knees" (xxvi, 5), again, became "*Creeps rustling* to her knees," and "her breathing ceas'd" (xxxiii, 7) was changed to "she panted quick." The Miltonic and Augustan device, moreover, of securing added emphasis and strength by beginning the line with a verb—

*Flushing* his brow, and in his painèd heart  
*Made* purple riot (xvi, 2-3),

*Uncasps* her warmèd jewels one by one;  
*Loosens* her fragrant boddice (xxvi, 3-4)

—a device first employed in *Isabella* and, under the influence of Milton, carried to an extreme in *Hyperion*, is still continued.<sup>4</sup>

It was earlier said that, just as he tended to draw somewhat more heavily upon the verb, Keats began in *Isabella* to decrease

<sup>3</sup> Verbs total 14% (401) in the *Eve of St. Agnes*, a rise of almost a seventh from *Hyperion* (12.2%).

<sup>4</sup> The number of lines beginning with a verb—earlier pointed out as progressing from 9.2% in the early couplets through 15% in *Isabella* to 17.5% in *Hyperion*—here total 15% (57).



very appreciably his use of adjectives; and that this process of supplanting the adjective with the verb is continued throughout the entire course of Keats's verse until the revised *Fall of Hyperion* in the autumn of 1819. Yet it is true that, despite the frequency of verbs in it, there is a reversion in the *Eve of St. Agnes*—possibly revealing an unconscious Spenserian influence—to as many adjectives as are found in *Endymion* (16%).<sup>5</sup> The epithets in these Spenserian stanzas, however, are radically different in character from those in the 1817 volume, in *Endymion*, and in *Isabella*. For, beginning with *Hyperion* and continuing even farther in the *Eve of St. Agnes*, Keats began to employ epithets appealing to senses other than that of sight, and, above all, to ally his other sensory images more closely with the sense of touch and thus render them stronger in connotative power. Keats's growing employment of epithets addressed to senses other than the eye is indicative of his craving for the concrete. I have discussed in another essay Keats's attempt to solidify his impressions by giving them an almost tactile strength, and likewise his ability to condense within one or two lines several images, each appealing to different senses, as in

Pale, lattic'd, chill, and silent as a tomb (xiii, 5)

or in

In the retired quiet of the night,  
Filling the chilly room with perfume light (xxxix, 4-5).

It may be briefly repeated that, in *Endymion*, few epithets are addressed to any sense but the visual; that there is, however, an appreciable increase of these non-visual, sensory epithets in *Isabella*; that even more are found in *Hyperion*; and that this increase, which is chronologically so marked and is in direct proportion to the comparative richness and sensory strength of each poem, becomes even more noteworthy in the *Eve of St. Agnes*, as indeed the subject-matter of the poem dictates.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> (458).

<sup>6</sup> Figured from the total number of adjectives, in all cases, which are: *End.*, I (1002); *Isab.* (592); *Hyper.*, I (335); *St. Agn.* (401). This count has been very strict, and has included only such epithets as—over and above all mere connotative potentiality—are by themselves directed to a specific non-visual sense. Thus, for example, the participles "rustling" or the "far-heard clarinet" would be included as

	Epithets addressed to			
	<i>Touch</i>	<i>Taste</i>	<i>Smell</i>	<i>Hearing</i>
<i>Endymion</i> , I:	1.6% (19)	.3% (4)	.1½% (2)	1.1% (14)
<i>Isabella</i> :	6.5% (36)	1.1% (6)	.7% (4)	1.3% (7)
<i>Hyperion</i> , I:	7.1% (26)	.2% (1)	.7% (1)	4.5% (18)
<i>Eve of St. Agnes</i> :	8.5% (39)	1.3% (6)	.9% (4)	5% (23)

This tendency to draw upon epithets appealing to senses more directly tactile than sight is apparent at every hand throughout the manuscript revisions. Thus Keats altered the beginning of the line

Pale, lattic'd, *high*, and silent as a tomb (xiii, 5)

to

Pale, lattic'd, *chill*, and silent as a tomb.

"Loosens her boddice" (xxvi, 4) became at length "Loosens her fragrant boddice"; and the line "And now saith he, my seraph fair, Awake" (xxxi, 5) was deferred until later, and in its place was put

Filling the *chilly* room with perfume light.

Even epithets which may not be strictly classed as sensory, but which possess some appeal to a non-visual sense by connotation, were substituted whenever possible, as when the epithet "sheltered" was altered to "woolly" in the line "And silent was the flock in woolly fold" (i, 4) or as when "wealthy Samarcand" (xxx, 9) was replaced with "silken Samarcand."

While instancing the phonetic, and parenthetically the connotative, nature of the diction of the verse written after *Isabella* and before *Lamia*, and while emphasizing its contribution to the heavily laden yet majestic music of phrase and line which distinguishes these poems from much other English verse, I would cursorily mention another characteristic of Keats's epithets—a characteristic, again, which I have dealt with in another discussion of Keats, although not in its chronological position in his poetical development. I refer to his use of epithets constructed from passive verbs ending in *ed* (and less often in *en*)

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epithets addressed specifically to the sense of hearing; whereas the adjective in "At these *voluptuous* accents" would not be included, since it may not be strictly classed as an aural epithet.

or from nouns used as passive verbs. The contribution of these epithets to the richness of *Hyperion*, the *Eve of St. Agnes*, and the odes is one of imagery rather than sound. Yet it is an intricate part and manifestation of the same striving for a concentrated intensity and a luxurious completeness of presentation from which the metrical and phonetic character of these poems took rise, and as such it merits at least incidental and brief illustration.

Keats had learned before writing *Hyperion* that by using past participles as epithets he could secure an energy momentarily caught at rest and condensed and imprisoned within an otherwise static image, and, by such a concentration of action, he effected a noticeable gain in strength and intensity. Thus—to take an instance from *Hyperion* which I have previously used—in the line, “Tall oaks, *branch-charmèd* by the earnest stars” (I, 74), the branches of the oaks, through the use of the compound “branch-charmèd,” are made the recipient of the energy: the steadily working spell cast by the “earnest stars” becomes concentrated within the branches until they are heavily charged with intensity. Keats, again, does not write “icy gusts”; he solidifies the gusts, he makes them heavy, by calling them “*icèd*” (*St. Agnes*, xxxvii, 3); and in the phrase “*icèd stream*” (xxxii, 4), the stream has been made momentarily static, but its potentiality of flowing is none the less dynamically present. The power of warmth to bring about sleep is concentrated in “*poppied warmth*” (xxvii, 3), and all the connotation which Lebanon can convey has been condensed within “*cedar’d Lebanon*” (xxx, 9). Similarly, in “*sculptur’d dead*” (ii, 5), “*smooth-sculptur’d stone*” (xxxiii, 9), “*carvèd angels*” (iv, 7), and “*carven imag’ries*” (xxiv, 2), whatever energy is connoted by the verbs “sculpture” and “carve” has been momentarily concentrated, contained, and stilled; but—as in “*wreathèd silver*” (xxxi, 3), “*shielded scutcheon blush’d with blood*” (xxiv, 9), “*spicèd dainties*” (xxx, 8), and “*heart-stifled*” (xxiii, 9)—a dynamic energy, made temporarily still and static, has through this very concentration gained in strength, in intensity, and in the revelation of the entire peculiar character of the phenomenon they seek to describe.

Instances abound where, in the manuscript revisions of the *Eve of St. Agnes*, Keats consciously attempted to introduce such

epithets. "He follow'd her along a passage dark" (xiii, 1) was altered to "He follow'd through a lowly *arch'd* way"; "Rose, like a spirit" (xxii, 4) became "Rose, like a *mission'd* spirit"; "with anguish spread thereon" (xxix, 3) was replaced with "*half-anguish'd*, threw thereon"; and "A drooping lamp" (xl, 6) was changed to "A *chain-droop'd* lamp." "As is the wing of evening tiger-moths" (xxiv, 6) was deleted, and all that may be said of the peculiar and distinctive quality of the substantive is concentrated within the newly-added epithet: "As are the tiger-moth's *deep-damask'd* wings." The connotation of the epithet is indelibly stamped into the substantive in the transition from "o'er the silent carpet" (xxviii, 8) to "over the *hush'd* carpet," and in the felicitous replacement of "where the fading moon" (xxix, 1) with "where the *faded* moon." And in the alteration, finally, of "bosom jewels" (xxvi, 3) to "*warm'd* jewels," the jewels are not in the process of being warmed, neither is warmth made a secondary quality through the use of the mere adjective "warm"; warmth, rather, has been concentrated within them until they are indeed weighted with this intensity of energy and this peculiarity of identity rendered static and concrete.

Without further laboring the character of these epithets in the *Eve of St. Agnes*, some emphasis should be laid on the precise chronological development in the use of them. For until after the completion of *Endymion*, Keats made excessive use of the y-ending epithets which Rossetti<sup>7</sup> adversely criticized: "sphery," "orby," "spangly," "surgy," "spermy," "streamy," "towery," "bloomy," "pillowy," and the like. A total of 29% (163) of the adjectives in the first book of *Endymion* are of this kind. In *Isabella*, however, such adjectives are almost halved, and the adjective ending in *ed* or *en* is strong. This supplanting of the y-ending adjective with the past participle as epithet jumps to an extreme degree in *Hyperion* and, even more, in the *Eve of St. Agnes*:

	y-ending adjectives	ed or en-ending epithets
<i>Isabella</i> :	10.8% (60)	9.7% (55)
<i>Hyperion</i> , I:	7.1% (28)	19% (76)
<i>Eve of St. Agnes</i> :	7.6% (35)	24.9% (114)

<sup>7</sup> See George C. Milner, "Marginalia Made by Dante G. Rossetti in His Copy of Keats," *Englische Studien*, LXI (1927), 214.

This syntactic, phonetic, and connotative change of diction towards discipline and restraint on the one hand and, on the other, towards a more impassioned intensity of image and phonetic body is paralleled by a development in the use of devices more strictly structural and prosodic in character. It was earlier illustrated how Keats, in *Isabella*, took over many patterns of repetition and parallelism which were largely peculiar to Fairfax and his Italian models, and which Hunt, in his *Critique on Fairfax's Tasso*, had censured; and stress was laid upon the probability that Keats, in the adaptation of these devices, sought a tightness and an emphasis lacking in his former models and in his own earlier work. Much of the peculiar parallelism and almost all of the repetition of word, phrase, or line, which were plentifully employed in *Isabella*, were dropped immediately afterwards. Some instances of parallelism remain in the *Eve of St. Agnes*, however, although they are far less baldly repetitive in verbal or structural sameness:

And on her silver cross soft amethyst,  
And on her hair a glory, like a saint (xxv, 5-6).

Flown, like a thought, until the morrow-day;  
Blissfully haven'd both from joy and pain;  
Clasp'd like a missal where swart Paynims pray;  
Blinded alike from sunshine and from rain (xxvii, 5-8).

Parallelism of normal sentence-order—

The owl, for all his feathers, was a cold;  
The hare limp'd trembling through the frozen grass (i, 2-3)

—may be immediately followed by parallelism of inverted sentence-order—

And silent was the flock in woolly fold:  
Numb were the Beadsman's fingers, while he told . . .

Parallelism of verbs is found in a few instances:

"Now tell me where is Madeline," said he,  
"O tell me, Angela, by the holy loom" (xiii, 6-7).

Direct repetition is almost wholly absent, except in the Miltonic

They glide, like phantoms, into the wide hall;  
Like phantoms, to the iron porch, they glide (xli, 1-2).

Still apparent, though much less, is that strict division of lines by pairs, which had been frequent in the alternate-rhyming lines of the *ottava rima* of *Isabella*, and for which Keats had found precedent in Spenser, Fairfax, and especially in the heroic quatrains of Dryden:

They told her how, upon St. Agnes' Eve,  
Young virgins might have visions of delight; /  
And soft adorings from their loves receive  
Upon the honey'd middle of the night (vi, 1-4).

He follow'd through a lowly archèd way,  
Brushing the cobwebs with his lofty plume; /  
And as she mutter'd "Well-a—well-a-day!"  
He found him in a little moonlight room (xiii, 1-4).

Her falt'ring hand upon the balustrade,  
Old Angela was feeling for the stair, /  
When Madeline, St. Agnes' charmèd maid,  
Rose, like a mission'd spirit, unaware (xxii, 1-4).

The "heaping up" of a "marked detail of words," which Hunt had found dominant in Fairfax,<sup>8</sup> and which Keats had employed in *Isabella*, is still frequent. Listing of verbs, for example, is found on occasion:

Perchance speak, kneel, touch, kiss—in sooth such things have  
been (ix, 9).

Sweet lady, let her pray, and sleep, and dream (xvi, 6).

As in Fairfax, detailing of nouns is still more common:

'Mid looks of love, defiance, hate, and scorn (viii, 6).

Of fruits, and flowers, and bunches of knot-grass (xxiv, 3).

Of candied apple, quince, and plum, and gourd (xxx, 4).

<sup>8</sup> See above, pp. 36-37.

Again as in Fairfax, enumeration of adjectives is most frequent of all:

His prayer he saith, this patient, holy man;

And back returneth, meagre, barefoot, wan (ii, 1, 3).

The maiden's chamber, silken, hush'd, and chaste (xxi, 7).

How chang'd thou art: how pallid, chill, and drear! (xxxv, 5).

Occasional use is made of the rhetorical and almost parallel expansion common in both eighteenth-century prose and verse. Thus, for example, a statement is made within a single line; it is expanded within the next two; and it is further expanded, qualified, or explained in an additional three or more lines:

He ventures in: let no buzz'd wisper tell:

All eyes be muffled, or a hundred swords  
Will storm his heart, love's fev'rous citadel:

For him, those chambers held barbarian hordes,  
Hyena foemen, and hot-blooded lords,  
Whose very dogs would execrations howl  
Against his lineage (x, 1-7).

Use of the triptology is still found:

A cloth of woven crimson, gold, and jet:—

The boisterous, midnight, festive clarion (xxix, 4, 6).

In blanchèd linen, smooth, and lavender'd (xxx, 2).

Pairing of words—often found in Fairfax and Spenser, but especially common in eighteenth-century verse—is almost as frequent as in *Isabella*:

And be liege-lord of all the *Elves* and *Fays* (xiv, 4).

And beard them, though they be more fang'd than *wolves* and *bears*  
(xvii, 9).

A casement *high* and *triple-arch'd* there was,

A shielded scutcheon blush'd with blood of *queens* and *kings* (xxxiv, 1, 9).

Blissfully haven'd both from *joy* and *pain*;

Blinded alike from *sunshine* and from *rain* (xxvii, 6, 8).

Balance is even more abundant than in the almost Drydenian concluding couplets of *Isabella*. It is sometimes so directly antithetical as to proclaim eighteenth-century models:

Of whisperers in *anger*, or in *sport* (viii, 5).

But let me *laugh* awhile, I've mickle time to *grieve* (xiv, 9).

Like *puzzl'd urchin* on an *aged crone* (xv, 3).

There are no *ears* to *hear*, or *eyes* to *see* (xxxix, 6).

It is occasionally Spenserian in the balance, which is continued and paralleled for more than one line, of substantives in the first half line and modifying clauses in the second:

With jellies / soother than the creamy curd,  
And lucent syrops, / tinct with cinnamon;  
Manna and dates, / in argosy transferr'd (xxx, 5-7).

It may consist of a balanced series of independent clauses:

Then takes his lamp, and riseth from his knees (ii, 2).

But dares not look behind, or all the charm is fled (xxvi, 9).

The hall-door shuts again, and all the noise is gone (xxix, 9).

Or, again as in Spenser, the second clause may be simply complementary:

He cursèd thee and thine, both house and land (xii, 3).

Thou art my heaven, and I thine eremite (xxxi, 7).

Most frequent of all is the simple balance of substantives which is common in much Elizabethan verse, including Spenser, and in the eighteenth-century couplet:



Anxious her lips, her breathing quick and short,  
 Amid the timbrels, and the throng'd resort (viii, 2, 4).  
 Hyena foemen, and hot-blooded lords (x, 5).  
 With silver taper's light, and pious care (xxii, 5).  
 And twilight saints, and dim emblazonings (xxiv, 8).  
 The kettle-drum, and far-heard clarionet (xxix, 7).

"Mrs. Tighe and Beattie," wrote Keats shortly before beginning the *Eve of St. Agnes*, "once delighted me—now I see through them and can find nothing in them—or weakness."<sup>9</sup> At the outset of this study, the extent was emphasized to which the early Spenserian stanzas of Keats, in the *Imitation of Spenser*, were structurally and metrically akin to those of his eighteenth-century predecessors in the use of the stanza. Such a kinship is still apparent, in a slight degree, in the stanzas of the *Eve of St. Agnes*; but far more actively present in these stanzas are devices of structure for which Keats turned directly to Spenser himself.

Spenser's precise employment of his stanza had been distinctive, and it may be questioned whether, in at least some respects, a similar employment of it was made by any subsequent writer in the stanza before Keats, or even afterwards. The Spenserian stanza falls naturally into two quatrains and an Alexandrine, and this division Spenser often preserved. Both as the octave of his sonnet rhyme-scheme (*abab bcbc cdcd ee*) and, with the addition of a final *c*-rhyming Alexandrine, as the stanza in which he wrote the *Faerie Queene*, it is probable that Spenser simply took over the interlocking pentameter quatrains of the Monk's-Tale stanza (*abab-bcbc*)—a stanza which he had already used.<sup>10</sup> As a consequence, he frequently used a full break at the conclusion of the fourth and eighth lines, his stanza

<sup>9</sup> To George and Georgiana Keats, Dec. 16, 1818-Jan. 4, 1819, *Letters*, p. 259.

<sup>10</sup> Notably at the opening of the *Shepherd's Calendar*, Ecl. XI. The probability that Spenser took over the Monk's-Tale stanza with a concluding Alexandrine has, of course, long since been noticed. See, for example, Tyrwhitt's edition of the *Canterbury Tales* (1775-78), IV, 87n., and Guest's *History of the English Rhythms* (1838), II, 389.

thus falling, very often, into simply a strict Monk's-Tale stanza with an almost separate concluding Alexandrine:

As when Old father Nilus gins to swell  
With timely pride above the Aegyptian vale,  
His fattie waves doe fertile slime outwell,  
And overflow each plaine and lowly dale:

But when his later spring gins to avale,  
Huge heapes of mudd he leaves, wherein there breed  
Ten thousand kindes of creatures, partly male  
And partly femall, of his fruitful seed;

Such ugly monstrous shapes elswher may no man reed  
(*F.Q.*, I, i, 21).

Full stops after both the fourth and eighth lines by no means always occur in the same stanza; but they do occur with more or less equal frequency. Thus, for example, out of the first four cantos of Book I of the *Faerie Queene*, a total of 37.7% (74) of the stanzas have a full break after the first quatrain; and 30.1% (59) of the stanzas of the same four cantos have a full break after the eighth line, or second quatrain.

Now the Spenserian imitators of the eighteenth-century, as was stated near the outset of this essay, had employed the fourth-line stop with great frequency indeed: about half of the stanzas of Thomson (53.2%),<sup>11</sup> Shenstone (48.5%),<sup>12</sup> and, later, Mary Tighe (47.6%)<sup>13</sup> contain it; in the first canto of Beattie's *Minstrel*, stanzas with the fourth-line full-stop total 75% (40); and "Spenserians" such as Pitt, Armstrong, and William Thompson used it almost exclusively. But all of the Augustan writers of the stanza—except for Beattie and Thomson<sup>14</sup>—had avoided or neglected the eighth-line stop: the low percentages in Shenstone (8.5%),<sup>15</sup> Mary Tighe (4.6%),<sup>16</sup> and Leigh Hunt's *Palace of Pleasure* (3%)<sup>17</sup> are characteristic; and other employers of the

<sup>11</sup> (41); figured from the *Castle of Indolence*, I.

<sup>12</sup> (17); from the *Schoolmistress*.

<sup>13</sup> (31); from *Psyche*, I.

<sup>14</sup> Thomson's *Castle of Indolence*, I: 27.2% (21); Beattie's *Minstrel*, I: 28.3% (17).

<sup>15</sup> (3); from the *Schoolmistress*.

<sup>16</sup> (3); from *Psyche*, I.

<sup>17</sup> (2); from Canto I.

stanza, such as Armstrong, Pitt, Wilkie, and William Thompson lack the eighth-line stoppage almost completely. It is in general equally absent in Spenserian stanzas after the turn of the century. Byron, frequently though he used the fourth-line stop, has few breaks in the Spenserian stanzas of *Childe Harold* between the eighth line and the closing Alexandrine; and Shelley, in his employment of the stanza, disregarded all quatrain-division whatsoever. In all the stanzas of the early *Imitation of Spenser*, Keats, as was earlier stated, abided by the traditional Augustan device of introducing a marked division after the first quatrain; but in these stanzas he used no full-stop at all after the eighth line.

Now in the *Eve of St. Agnes*, Keats, like his Augustan predecessors, used the first quatrain division even more frequently than Spenser:

Soon, trembling in her soft and chilly nest,  
In sort of wakeful swoon, perplex'd she lay,  
Until the poppi'd warmth of sleep oppress'd  
Her soothed limbs, and soul fatigued away (xxvii, 1-4).

Stol'n to this paradise, and so entranced,  
Porphyro gazed upon her empty dress,  
And listen'd to her breathing, if it chanced  
To wake into a slumberous tenderness (xxviii, 1-4).

Then by the bed-side, where the faded moon  
Made a dim, silver twilight, soft he set  
A table, and, half anguish'd, threw thereon  
A cloth of woven crimson, gold, and jet (xxix, 1-4).

Her falt'ring hand upon the balustrade,  
Old Angela was feeling for the stair  
When Madeline, St. Agnes' charmèd maid,  
Rose, like a mission'd spirit, unaware (xxii, 1-4).

A total of no less than 47.6% (20) of the stanzas of the *Eve of St. Agnes* contain this fourth-line stop as compared with the 37.7% in Spenser. But Keats's sense of stanzaic structure led him also, unlike his eighteenth-century predecessors and his own contemporaries, to employ the second quatrain-division, or eighth-line stop, as—to continue on with the stanza last quoted—

With silver taper's light, and pious care,  
 She turn'd, and down the aged gossip led  
 To a safe level matting. Now prepare,  
 Young Porphyro, for gazing on that bed;

She comes, she comes again, like ring-dove fray'd and fled.

Or again:

O for some drowsy Morphean amulet!  
 The boisterous, midnight, festive clarion,  
 The kettle-drum, and far-heard clarionet,  
 Affray his ears, though but in dying tone:—

The hall door shuts again, and all the noise is gone (xxix, 5-9).

The wakeful bloodhound rose, and shook his hide,  
 But his sagacious eye an inmate owns:  
 By one, and one, the bolts full easy slide:—  
 The chains lie silent on the footworn stones;—

The key turns, and the door upon its hinges groans (xli, 5-9).

No less than 33.3% (14) of the stanzas of the *Eve of St. Agnes* possess this second quatrain-division—a percentage higher even than that of Spenser (30.1%), and, as far as I am aware, appreciably beyond that of any other writer in the stanza.

But other disciplinary devices of structure are employed in the *Eve of St. Agnes*. The feminine ending, with which the couplets and sonnets of the 1817 volume had been filled, which had been severely excised in *Endymion* (5½%), which had been further lowered in *Isabella* (2.9%) to a level scarcely above that of Fairfax, and which had again dropped to 1.9% in *Hyperion*, is now wholly absent. It will be remembered, furthermore, that in *Isabella* Keats strove to eradicate the broken and run-on line of his early couplets and sonnets; and that in *Hyperion*, indeed, he sought a rigid integrity of line to such an extent that he avoided Milton's example and used the unbroken line with perhaps more frequency than any other blank-verse writer since Surrey. The unbroken line is more or less abundant in the *Eve of St. Agnes* as well, and often continues for as many as three lines together:

Full on this casement shone the wintry moon,  
 And threw warm gules on Madeline's fair breast,  
 As down she knelt for heaven's grace and boon (xxv, 1-3).

Although such lines are less frequent (35.7%<sup>18</sup> as compared to 55.3%) than they were in *Isabella*—where so extreme a reaction in their favor had been suddenly made—their number is comparatively large, and is not much below that of even the Spenserian stanzas of Shelley's *Adonais* (40.2%),<sup>19</sup> where the unbroken (but run-on line) is almost a mannerism.

Such a line, when run-on as in Shelley, leads to extreme rapidity of flow; when end-stopped, however, it emphasizes the integrity and unity of the line. Now Keats, as we have seen, drastically reduced the run-on line after *Endymion* to 26% in *Isabella*; and the enjambment of *Hyperion* (34%)—in direct contrast to *Paradise Lost* (59%)—is perhaps the lowest of any major blank-verse poem in the language, except for those of Surrey and Gascoigne among the Elizabethans and of a few eighteenth-century poets. End-stopped lines are even more the rule in the Spenserian stanzas of the *Eve of St. Agnes*, and continue for several lines together:

That ancient Beadsman heard the prelude soft;  
 And so it chanc'd, for many a door was wide,  
 From hurry to and fro. Soon, up aloft,  
 The silver, snarling trumpets 'gan to chide:  
 The level chambers, ready with their pride,  
 Were glowing to receive a thousand guests (iv, 1-6).

He follow'd through a lowly archèd way,  
 Brushing the cobwebs with his lofty plume,  
 And as she mutter'd "Well-a—well-a-day!"  
 He found him in a little moonlight room,  
 Pale, lattic'd, chill, and silent as a tomb (xiii, 1-5).

For in the *Eve of St. Agnes* run-on lines have now been drastically cut to 17.4% (66). Except for Spenser, who used enjambment with great reserve in his stanzas, and whose run-on lines in the first four cantos of the *Faerie Queene* (17.5%)<sup>20</sup> closely

<sup>18</sup> (135).

<sup>19</sup> (199).

<sup>20</sup> (299).

parallel those in the *Eve of St. Agnes*—except for Spenser himself, I question whether any other writer in the Spenserian stanza has been as wary of run-on lines as Keats.<sup>21</sup>

Despite his adoption of the Miltonic run-on line, Wordsworth—more perhaps than any other writer of the sonnet or of stanzaic verse—had frequently drawn in his sonnets upon a single, highly integrated, and fully-stopped line, as in

Venice, the eldest Child of Liberty.  
She was a maiden City, bright and free;  
No guile seduced, no force could violate ("Once did she hold,"  
4-7).

Young Vane, and others who called Milton friend.  
These moralists could act and comprehend:  
They knew how genuine glory was put on ("Great men have  
been among us," 4-6).

Oh, raise us up, return to us again;  
And give us manners, virtue, freedom, power.  
Thy soul was like a star and dwelt apart;  
Thou had'st a voice whose sound was like the sea (London,  
1802, 7-10).

With or without the example of Wordsworth consciously before him, Keats, in keeping with his progressive advance in the use of the unbroken line and of end-stoppage generally, now carried even farther the use of the individual, fully-stopped line, already begun in *Hyperion*:

Flattered to tears this aged man and poor;  
But no—already had his deathbell rung:  
The joys of all his life were said and sung:  
His was harsh penance on St. Agnes' Eve (iii, 2-5).

But his sagacious eye an inmate owns:  
By one, and one, the bolts full easy slide:—  
The chains lie silent on the footworn stones;—  
The key turns, and the door upon its hinges groans (xli, 6-9).

<sup>21</sup> Contemporary writers in the stanza used run-on lines at least twice as often as Keats. Characteristic, for example, is Shelley's *Adonais*, in which run-on lines total 35.4% (175); and the third canto of Byron's *Childe Harold*, where the total is 35.2% (374).

Considerable emphasis was laid, at the beginning of this study, upon the extent to which the early sonnets and couplets of Keats paralleled the sonnets and couplets of Leigh Hunt in throwing over all traditional English cæsural placing and in showing favor to a cæsura which was weak or feminine—that is to say, after an unstressed syllable—and which, in general, appeared late in the line. Stress was subsequently laid upon Keats's sudden attempt in *Isabella* to return to orthodoxy in the use of an early and masculine cæsura—particularly the post-fourth-syllable pause; and illustration has from time to time been given of the precise nature of this orthodoxy of cæsural-placing, in both prosodic practice and theory, from the time of the Elizabethans until Keats's own day. It was later observed that Milton, despite his orthodoxy in employing a pause at once masculine and near the center of the line, had none the less, in his attempt to achieve a heavier and more dignified line, departed sufficiently from traditional English poetic practice to prefer the cæsura placed immediately after the sixth syllable rather than the common post-fourth-syllable pause; and it was pointed out that Keats, in *Hyperion*, momentarily forsook his rapidly increasing tendency to abide by customary Elizabethan and eighteenth-century cæsural placing, and followed the lead of Milton almost as closely as he had previously followed Hunt.

In the *Eve of St. Agnes*, Keats once again returned to traditional placing of the pause, and to a far more marked degree, even, than he had shown in *Isabella*. The feminine cæsura is even further cut (41% to 33.3%).<sup>22</sup> Especially notable are the drop in the third-syllable cæsura (8.3% to 2.3%), as in

The music, (x) yearning like a God in pain (vii, 2),

and the decrease in the mid, or fifth-syllable, cæsura (22.7% to 17.8%):

Like pious incense (x) from a censer old (i, 7).

There is certainly no genuine parallel between the disposition of the cæsura in the *Eve of St. Agnes* and in the *Faerie Queene*, as there is between Keats's early sonnets and couplets and those of Hunt, or even between *Hyperion* and *Paradise Lost*. He is

<sup>22</sup> (112).

not yet so strict as Spenser, for example, in his adherence to the traditional fourth-syllable cæsure. It is of some interest, however, that like Spenser, or for that matter most Elizabethans, he now shows preference, in order, for the fourth, sixth, fifth, seventh, third, and second and eighth-syllable pauses.<sup>23</sup> However, despite the manifestation in the *Eve of St. Agnes* of this continued working towards a strict Elizabethan and eighteenth-century placing of pause, Keats occasionally shifts the cæsure of the concluding Alexandrine from its mid, or post-sixth-syllable, position, as in

With hair blown back, (x) and wings put cross-wise on their  
breasts (iv, 9),

For aye unsought for (x) slept among his ashes cold (xlii, 9).

The hexameter pause had been traditionally placed after the sixth syllable:

But let me laugh awhile, (x) I've mickle time to grieve (xiv, 9).

In thus shifting the pause in some Alexandrines, Keats closely followed Spenser (28.5% as compared with 28%),<sup>24</sup> and, in at least this one respect, is even less strictly orthodox than the eighteenth-century Spenserians.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>23</sup>	<i>Eve of St. Agnes</i> *	<i>Faerie Queene</i> , I, i, 1-225.
	After	After
	syllable no: 2: 1.3% (5)	syllable no: 2: 1% (2)
	3: 2.3% (8)	3: 3.5% (7)
	4: 25% (84)	4: 43.5% (87)
	5: 17.8% (60)	5: 14.5% (29)
	6: 24.3% (82)	6: 22% (44)
	7: 10.1% (44)	7: 6.5% (13)
	8: 2.3% (8)	8: 1% (2)
	Double or triple pauses: 10.4% (45)	8% (16)

\* In the cæsural counts here of both the *Eve of St. Agnes* and the *Faerie Queene*, the pentameter lines alone have been included.

<sup>24</sup> The 28.5% of the Alexandrines in the *Eve of St. Agnes* which have no pause in the precise center total 12. Those in the *Faerie Queene* (I, i, 1-225) total 7. Alexandrines having double or triple pauses, one of which may come in the center of the line—as in “She comes, (x) she comes again, (x) like ring-dove fray’d and fled (xxii, 9)—have not been included, but have been considered as legitimately paused.

<sup>25</sup> Cf., for example: Beattie's *Minstrel*, I: 13.3% (20); Leigh Hunt's *Palace of Pleasure*, I: 16% (11); Mrs. Tighe's *Psyche*, I: 10.7% (7). For characteristic eighteenth-century pronouncements on the necessity of adhering to the mid or sixth-syllable cæsure in the Alexandrine, see John Newbery, *Art of Poetry* (1762), I, 13:



Use of hiatus or vowel-gaping is still found in the *Eve of St. Agnes*:

That he might see her beauty unespied (xix, 4).

For I am slow and feeble, and scarce dare (xx, 5).

But it usually occurs only in unstressed syllables:

Save one old beldame, weak in body and in soul (x, 9).

While Porphyro upon her face doth look (xv, 2).

Quickly on this feast-night: by the tambour frame (xx, 3).

Indeed, the number of lines which contain vowel-gaping reveals, once again, the gradual decrease of its use.<sup>26</sup>

More, even, than in *Hyperion*, Keats continued in the *Eve of St. Agnes* to display an increasing adherence to the theoretical scansion of the line. With the example of Milton before him, he had reverted a bit in *Hyperion*, as we have seen, to the trisyllabic foot (2.8%); this he diminished again in the *Eve of St. Agnes* to 2% (40).<sup>27</sup> An actual trisyllabic foot—a foot, that is, which is

Shenstone's "On Books and Writers," *Works* (1764), II, 275; and Anselm Bayly, *Music, Poetry, and Oratory* (1789), p. 102. See also Gray's "Observations on English Metre," *Works* (ed. Gosse, 1884), I, 331, where criticism is made of Spenser's failure to use the sixth-syllable caesura more frequently in the Alexandrine.

<sup>26</sup> *Epistle to Mathew*: 19.3% (18).

*Endymion*, I, 1-231: 17.3% (40).

*Isabella*: 12.3% (62).

*Hyperion*, I: 11.7% (42).

*Eve of St. Agnes*: 11.6% (44).

<sup>27</sup> Trisyllabic feet in which elision may be effected are still elidable by syncope (55%; 22)—

Will storm / his heart, / Love's few / erous cit / adel (x, 3)—

rather than by synaeresis (35%; 14)—

So saying, / she hob / bled off / with bus / y fear (xxi, 1).

Elision by apocope—

Through man / y a dusk / y gall / ery, / they gain (xxi, 6)—

is far more used than in *Hyperion* (7.5%, or 3, as compared with 1.3%). Elision of trisyllabic feet by apocope was much more common in Elizabethan and early seventeenth-century verse than it was later; it was increasingly supplanted by syncope and synaeresis after the middle of the seventeenth century.

hardly elidable by any conventional means—appears only once:

Quickly / on this / feast-night: / by the tam / bour frame (xx, 3).

This sole appearance contrasts with the frequency of such feet in *Hyperion* (6.7%) and especially *Endymion* (12%). Instances are often found in the revisions of the *Eve of St. Agnes* where, though matters of phonetics and especially image may also have helped to dictate the change, alteration was made of unelidable trisyllabic feet. Thus

While he / from forth / the cab / inet brought / a heap (xxx, 3)

was replaced with

While he / from forth / the clos / et brought / a heap;

and the line

I have found, / but can / not rob / thy down / y nest (xxxviii, 7)

was changed to read

Though I / have found, / I will / not rob / thy nest.

Care was exercised in rejecting even elidable trisyllabic feet, as in the omission before the seventh stanza of the two lines,

Offering / as sac / rifice / —all in / the dream—  
Delic / ious food / even to / her lips / brought near;

or as in the replacement of

The entranc / èd Por / phyro stol / en to Par / adise (xxviii, 1)

with

Stol'n to / this par / adise / and so / entranc'd,

where three elidable trisyllabic feet are simultaneously eradicated.

Even more indicative of Keats's tendency to adhere more closely to the theoretical scansion, and consequently secure greater integrity of line, is the marked paucity in this poem of metrical inversion. Initial inversion of accent—always traditional and extolled, and a method of variety towards which Keats in general seems to have worked throughout the course of his technical development—is still low (2.4%).<sup>28</sup> But the medially inverted foot, which, in contrast to all eighteenth-century practice and theory, Keats had probably taken over from Hunt and Chapman, and which, through the influence of Milton, still remained in *Hyperion* (1.5%), is now drastically excised. Very few indeed are the instances, such as

To where / he stood, / *hid from* / the torch / 's flame (xi, 3),

where it is found (.03%).<sup>29</sup> It is likewise apparent throughout the revisions that Keats was trying to do away almost entirely with medial inversion. Thus, to take but two instances: the line

Still, still / she dreams— / *louder* / the frost / wind blows (xxxvi, 7)

was deleted; and double inversion, both initial and medial—a combination strenuously condemned in eighteenth-century prosodic writing—was replaced by simple initial inversion alone in the alteration of

*She was* / *hoodwink'd* / with fanc / y: all / amort (viii, 7)

to

Hoodwink'd / with faer / y fanc / y; all / amort.

But if, in his attempt to secure a more disciplined integrity of structure, Keats sought increasingly to stick more closely to the skeletal framework of the line, he also continued, in so far as traditionally legitimate metrical variation permitted, to employ whatever devices might retard the movement and augment the weight of his lines. Emphasis was laid, in the discussion of

<sup>28</sup> (29); figured from the 1196 feet of ll. 1-234.

<sup>29</sup> (4); *loc. cit.*

*Hyperion*, upon Keats's progressive abandonment of stress-failure or the light pyrrhic foot—always the most frequent metrical variation in English verse. Pyrrhic feet are decreased even more in the *Eve of St. Agnes* from their already diminished frequency in *Hyperion* (6.7%<sup>30</sup> as compared with 10.3%). The use of the initial pyrrhic foot, or unstressed beginning,—

To a / safe lev / el matt / ing. Now / prepare (xxii, 7)

—which had been present in 10.7% of the lines of the *Epistle to Matthew*, 8% in *Endymion*, 6.7% in *Isabella*, and 2.6% in *Hyperion*, is now found in only 2.4% (9) of the lines. The use of two contiguous pyrrhic feet, which had been the bane of most eighteenth-century and early nineteenth-century prosodists, and which had on occasion appeared in Keats's early verse, is here found only once:

Ere Mad / eline, / like an / affright / ed swan (xxii, 3).

And in the revision of this line, one pyrrhic is removed and the other is balanced by a spondee:

When Mad / eline, / St. Ag / nes' charm / ed maid.

Such contiguous balancing with spondees is by now generally the rule when a pyrrhic foot is used. Two spondees very often flank a pyrrhic:

And turn, / sole-thought / ed, to / one Lad / y there (v, 6).

More tame / for his / gray hairs— / alas / me! flit (xii, 5).

Two pyrrhics will less frequently flank a spondee:

So, purp / osing / each mom / ent to / retire (ix, 1).

<sup>30</sup> (80); *loc. cit.*

Which was, / to lead / *him*, in / close sec / *recy* (xix, 1).

Simple jointure of one each is the most common, as in

He pass / eth by; / and *his* / *weak spir* / it fails (ii, 8);

or in the pictorially rising rhythm of

And *the* / long *carp* / ets rose / along / the gust / y floor (xl, 9).

On those occasions, finally, when an unbalanced pyrrhic is employed, their use would seem to be almost specifically determined. Characteristic is the line,

Feebly / she laughs / in the / bright lang / uid moon (xv, 1),

where the balancing spondee is removed to give an almost onomatopoeic descending and fading rhythm in

Feebly / she laugh / eth in / the lang / uid moon.<sup>21</sup>

The excessive employment of the spondaic foot, which had been first suggested in *Isabella* and which had become extremely pronounced in *Hyperion*, is as much a metrical peculiarity of the *Eve of St. Agnes* as of any of Keats's verse written between *Isabella* and *Lamia*. Frequent alteration of lines is made with resulting spondees. Strength from the addition of verbs and the dropping of a rather unladylike oath are not the only effects of the change from "Ó Christ, / I deem" (xvi, 8) to "Go, Go! / I

<sup>21</sup> Cf. as well the transition from "was flick' / ring out" (xl, 6) to "was flick / ering by / each door"; and the similar exchange to a scurry of light syllables, almost pictorially suggestive in its falling cadence, of

to "Flutter'd / with cold" (xl, 8)

"Flutter'd / in the / besieg / ing wind's / uproar."

deem." The weight of spondees, as well as greater concentration of image in the use of the *ed*-ending epithet, are the result in the alterations of

As is / the wing / of eve / ning tig / er moths (xxiv, 6)  
to

As are / the tig / er moth's / *deep-dam* / ask'd wings;  
of

A tab / le, and / with ang / uish spread / thereon (xxix, 3)  
to

A tab / le, and, / *half-ang* / uish'd, threw / thereon;

and of "A droop / ing lamp" (xl, 6) to "A chain- / *droop'd lamp*." Spondaic feet in the *Eve of St. Agnes* total 10.1%.<sup>32</sup> Although the amount is slightly less than what it had been in *Hyperion* (11.7%), the ensuing weight and emphasis is greater because of the drastic reduction of pyrrhic or unstressed feet; and the amount is even more significant when it is remembered that the average appearance of the spondee in English verse is probably in only about 2% of the feet.

It may be mentioned, finally, that in the *Eve of St. Agnes* Keats achieved a noteworthy retarding of flow and a weighted ballasting of the stanza by using spondees particularly towards the close of the stanza, as in

*Knights*, *lad* / ies, pray / ing in / *dumb or* / at'ries,

He pass / eth by; / and his / *weak spir* / it fails

To think / how they / *may ache* / in ic / y hoods / and mails (ii, 7-9)

"We're safe / enough; / here in / *this arm-* / *chair sit*,

And tell / me how"— / "*Good saints!* / *not here;* / *not here;*

<sup>32</sup> (12); ll. 1-234.

Follow / me, child, / or else / *these stones* / will be / thy bier"  
(xii, 7-9).

But for / *one mom* / ent in / the ted / ious hours,

That he / *might gaze* / and wor / ship all / unseen;

Perchance / *speak, kneel*, / *touch, kiss* / —in sooth / *such things* /

have been (ix, 7-9)

If the first six lines of each stanza be taken as a separate entity, indeed, it will be found that a total of 8.7% (66) of their feet are spondaic; and if the last three lines of these same stanzas likewise be considered separately, their spondaic feet rise to the extreme number of 14.2% (55).<sup>33</sup>

Illustrations were given, in the discussion of *Hyperion*, of the marked extent—entirely apart from the pattern of pattern or design—to which Keats began, in the autumn of 1818, to draw upon accented historically "long" vowels;<sup>34</sup> and detailed comparison was made of the frequency of these vowels in *Hyperion*, in Keats's own earlier verse, and in the verse of other poets. Even more care was exercised to employ vowels of this sort in the *Eve of St. Agnes*. To take, for example, the first instances at hand: the epithet "gentle" is replaced by "pious" to give

With silver taper's light, and pious care (xxii, 5).

The gain in physical intensity of connotation is accompanied by the addition of a more sonorous vowel in the alteration of

*Rending* with eloquence her balmy side (xxiii, 7)  
to

*Paining* with eloquence her balmy side.

"Shelter'd fold" (i, 4) becomes "woolly fold"; "the aged bel-dame" (xi, 1) becomes "the aged creature"; "spread thereon"

<sup>33</sup> In ll. 1-234.

<sup>34</sup> See above, pp. 87-88.

(xxix, 3) is changed to "threw thereon"; and "twisted silver" (xxi, 3) is altered to "wreathed silver." A similar result is gained in the transition from "softest vow" (xxxv, 3) to "sweetest vow," from "Blendeth its perfume" (xxxvi, 6) to "Blendeth its odour," and from "his unanger'd eye" (xli, 6) to "his sagacious eye." If accented vowels of this variety rose to the unusual degree of 25.3% in *Hyperion*,<sup>35</sup> they rose even higher in these Spenserian stanzas. For here they probably average no less than 27.6%<sup>36</sup>—a total which, as far as I am aware, is unsurpassed by most poets, and, by Keats himself, equalled only in one of the five odes he composed three months later.

In the transition to the kind of diction drawn upon in the *Eve of St. Agnes*, and in Keats's adaptation or retention of rhetorical devices or patterns of phrase, newly acquired or previously used; in his increasing employment of the individually-integrated, masculine-ending, and end-stopped line; in his more uniform acceptance of traditional placing of pause; in his continued weighting of the line with spondaic feet and sonorous vowels, and in his attempt in the manipulation of meter generally to achieve greater integrity of line by abiding, with no loss of variety, more closely by its theoretical scansion; and notably in his adherence, even stricter than Spenser's, to a marked first-quatrain division, and in his noting and retention—unlike his eighteenth-century predecessors or his own contemporaries—of an even more extensive second-quatrain division than Spenser himself had employed;—in his entire stylistic management of the Spenserian stanzas of this poem, Keats exemplifies even further than in *Hyperion* a striving for a heightened intensity of expression—an intensity at once impassioned and weightily rich in sound and image and, at the same time, strengthened and constrained by disciplinary bonds even firmer and stricter than formerly. Yet the *Eve of St. Agnes* is only a step in the rapid working out of this peculiarly dual development, and the ultimate result of this development was not reached until, in the following April and May, Keats turned to the composition of the odes.

<sup>35</sup> See above, p. 87.

<sup>36</sup> Ll. 1-63: a total of 174 out of 630 vowels.



## 4

## THE LATER SONNETS

Before continuing, however, with the chronological progression of Keats's stylistic craftsmanship and turning at once to the odes, some remarks should be made about the sonnets which Keats wrote after the close of 1817. It will be remembered that, of the thirty-six sonnets written between February, 1815, when the influence of Hunt became paramount, and January, 1818, all had been basically Petrarchan in rhyme-scheme; that in following Hunt and employing this form, Keats was largely adhering to contemporary sonnet-fashion; and that, for the several varying sestetis which he used, he drew upon rhyme-schemes common in the plaintive sonneteers of the preceding century.<sup>1</sup> Of the twenty-eight sonnets, however, which Keats wrote after January, 1818, only seven are Petrarchan in rhyme-scheme. Three of these Petrarchan sonnets possess the *cdcdcd* sestet, with which nineteen of his earlier sonnets had concluded; two have the *cdcdde* sestet which, though common in some Elizabethan sonneteers, had attracted few subsequent writers of any note except, on occasion, Bowles and Hunt; one has the *cdedec* sestet, twice used by Milton, not uncommon in the eighteenth-century sonneteers, and used by Keats himself in three earlier sonnets; and one, finally, has the unusual sestet *cdccdd*. In addition to these seven sonnets, there are four which are rather irregular and one which is composed of three pentameter quatrains without a concluding couplet. It is significant that the remaining sixteen sonnets are written in the Shakespearean rhyme-scheme (*abab cdcd efef gg*) which had been first introduced by Surrey, which had been drawn upon as their basic form by Daniel, Drayton, Griffin, Fletcher, Barnes, Smith, Constable, and many other Elizabethan sonneteers, and which takes its name from its chief exponent.

I shall not attempt to analyze the patterns of structure which characterize the seven Petrarchan sonnets. With the exception of a single, quickly-written, and purposely trivial sonnet,<sup>2</sup> none was written after the summer of 1818. Moreover, except for the

<sup>1</sup> See especially Appendix B, pp. 191-194.

<sup>2</sup> "The House of Mourning written by Mr. Scott," first published by Mr. Claude Finney.

matter of cæsural placing, they are similar in structural peculiarity to the earlier sonnets which were analyzed at the beginning of this study.<sup>3</sup> But emphasis should be laid upon the extent to which the sixteen Shakespearean sonnets are cast into the strict quatrain-division, each terminated by a full stop, which Shakespeare himself had almost exclusively used:

Why did I laugh tonight? No voice will tell:  
No God, no Demon of severe response,  
Designs to reply from heaven or from Hell.  
Then to my human heart I turn at once.

Heart! Thou and I are here sad and alone;  
I say, why did I laugh! O mortal pain!  
O Darkness! Darkness! ever must I moan,  
To question Heaven and Hell and Heart in vain.

Why did I laugh? I know this Being's lease,  
My fancy to its utmost blisses spreads;  
Yet would I on this very midnight cease,  
And the world's gaudy ensigns see in shreds;

Verse, Fame, and Beauty are intense indeed,  
But Death intenser—Death is Life's high meed.

No less than 53% (9) of these sonnets have a full stop after every quatrain. The proportion would be appreciably more were it not that Keats, after having employed a full-stop at the close of each of the first two quatrains, occasionally runs on the third quatrain into the concluding couplet, as in

then on the shore  
Of the wide world I stand alone, and think  
Till love and fame to nothingness do sink ("When I have fears").

Thou dost eclipse  
Every delight with sweet remembering,  
And grief unto my darling joys dost bring ("Time's sea").

what strange powers  
Hast thou, as a mere shadow! But how great,  
When in an Eye thou art alive with fate! ("Blue! 'tis the life of heaven").

<sup>3</sup> See above pp. 15-16.

The sonnets written after January, 1818, illustrate metrical tendencies continually apparent throughout the maturer verse of Keats—greatly reduced run-on lines (19.3%)<sup>4</sup> and feminine endings (3.8%),<sup>5</sup> increasing use of the Augustan initially inverted foot (5.2%),<sup>6</sup> with corresponding care in admitting medial inversion of accent (1.1%)<sup>7</sup> and trisyllabic feet (1%),<sup>8</sup> abundant use of spondees (9.3%)<sup>9</sup> and more rigid adherence to traditional cæsural placing.<sup>10</sup> But there is, in addition, a marked Shakespearean influence in these sonnets. It is probable, for example, that the careful adherence in them to quatrain division—unusual in the relatively few sonnets of Keats's day which were written in this rhyme-scheme—is indicative of Shakespeare's influence. Of somewhat more significance are parallels of balance and general structure between many of these sonnets and those of Shakespeare; and I do not believe that such parallels are found to a proportionate degree in any other post-Elizabethan sonneteer.

In his employment of the sonnet-stanza, Shakespeare secured a unity and integrity of structure beyond that of any contemporary sonneteer except occasionally Drayton. His sonnets almost invariably begin with an end consciously in view. The

<sup>4</sup> (76); figured, along with the feminine endings, against the whole of the 28 sonnets written after January, 1818. Cf. early sonnets (30.9%).

<sup>5</sup> (15); Cf. the earlier sonnets (8.4%) and Shakespeare's sonnets (7.4%). It is interesting that this figure (3.8%) is exactly the same as that for Milton's English sonnets.

<sup>6</sup> (44); figured from twelve sonnets (*On Sitting Down to Read King Lear Once Again*, "When I have fears," "Blue! 'tis the life of heaven," *The Human Seasons*, *What the Thrush Said*, *To Homer*, the two sonnets *On Fame*, *To Ailsa Rock*, "As Hermes once," "Why did I laugh," and "Bright Star"). All other analyses of feet and of cæsural placing are taken from these sonnets.

<sup>7</sup> (10).

<sup>8</sup> (9); of which 44.4% (4) are elidable by synæresis and 55.5% (5) by syncope; while none at all are actual, unelidable trisyllabic feet.

<sup>9</sup> (79).

<sup>10</sup> After 2nd syl: 3.5% (6); 3rd: 4.7% (8); 4th: 31.6% (53); 5th: 23.8% (40); 6th: 19% (32); 7th: 7.1% (12); 8th: 0; double or triple: 10.1% (17). Cf. Shakespeare (sonnets 45, 50, 60): 2nd: 2.3% (5); 3rd: 3.3% (7); 4th: 41.4% (87); 5th: 22.8% (48); 6th: 14.2% (30); 7th: 5.7% (12); 8th: .5% (1); double or triple: 9.5% (20). Although the comparison is not too close, I see no reason to suppose why the example of Shakespeare did not assist as much as that of any one else in persuading Keats to break from the wretched pause-placing of Hunt. It is also of some interest that Keats follows the precise order of preference which Shakespeare shows: 4th, 5th, 6th, double, 7th, 3rd, 2nd, 8th; for most Elizabethans gave preference to the 6th over the 5th syllable, as does Keats himself in most of his other verse after *Endymion*.

first two lines, for example, can often be answered by the concluding couplet:

Devouring Time, blunt thou the lion's paws,  
And make the earth devour her own sweet brood.

Yet do thy worst, old Time: despite thy wrong  
My love shall in my verse ever live young (xix).

What is your substance? Whereof are you made,  
That millions of strange shadows on you tend?

In all external grace you have some part,  
But you like none, none you, for constant heart (liii).

Not marble, nor the gilded monuments  
Of princes, shall outlive this powerful rhyme.

So, till the judgment that yourself arise,  
You live in this, and dwell in lovers' eyes (lv).

Even more frequently the last line is no more than a logical conclusion to the first line of the sonnet, as in

How heavy do I journey on my way,

My grief lies onward, and my joy behind (l).

Tired with all these, for restful death I cry,

Save that, to die, I leave my love alone (lxvi).

No, Time, thou shalt not boast that I do change,

I will be true, despite thy scythe and thee (cxxiii).

The later sonnets of Keats have a similar unity and integrity of structure and of purpose. In them, too, the first two lines may be answered by the last two lines:

Standing aloof in giant ignorance,  
Of thee I hear and of the Cyclades,

Such seeing hadst thou, as it once befel  
To Dian, Queen of Earth, and Heaven, and Hell (*To Homer*).

O that a week could be an age, and we  
Felt parting and warm meeting every week.

This morn, my friend, and yester-evening taught  
Me how to harbour such a happy thought (*To John Hamilton Reynolds*).

O soft embalmer of the still midnight,  
Shutting, with careful fingers and benign,

Turn the key deftly in the oilèd wards  
And seal the hushèd casket of my soul (*To Sleep*).

How fever'd is the man who cannot look  
Upon his mortal days with temperate blood,

Why then should man, teasing the world for grace,  
Spoil his salvation for a fierce miscreed? (*On Fame, II*).

Again as in Shakespeare, the last line alone may logically answer the first:

Hearken, thou craggy ocean pyramid!

Another cannot wake thy giant size (*To Ailsa Rock*).

Of late two dainties were before me plac'd,

Mum chance art thou with both oblig'd to part (*On Hearing the Bagpipe*).

Famè, like a wayward girl, will still be coy,

Then, if she likes it, she will follow you (*On Fame, I*).

The repetition of phrase from line to line, which had appeared in rare instances in the early sonnets, and which, following Fairfax, had later been abundantly present in *Isabella*, is on occasion found in those sonnets written about the time of *Isabella*:

Blue! 'tis the life of heaven . . .

Blue! 'tis the life of waters . . . (I, 5).

O thou whose face hath felt the Winter's wind,

O thou, whose only book has been the light

O fret not after knowledge—I have none,  
And yet my song comes native with the warmth.

O fret not after knowledge—I have none,  
And yet the Evening listens (*What the Thrush Said*, 1, 5, 9-12).

O Bag-pipe thou didst steal my heart away

O Bag-pipe thou didst re-assert thy sway (*On Hearing the Bag-pipe*, 9, 11).

But in general, throughout the course of these sonnets, repetition, when used, is quite reminiscent of that which Shakespeare had most frequently employed in his sonnets. In his attempt to secure and maintain structural integrity and emphasis, Shakespeare had drawn upon many devices by which balance of line might be acquired; and one of these devices was simply the repetition of a word within the line:

*Music* to hear, why hear'st thou *music* sadly (viii)

Against that *time*, if ever that *time* come (xlix).

From this *vile* world, with *vilest* worms to dwell (lxxi).

And *darkly bright*, are *bright* in *dark* directed (xliii).

Such balance by repetition is now employed by Keats as well:

Then one poor *year* a thousand *years* would be (*To John Hamilton Reynolds*, 3).

At thought of *idleness* cannot be *idle*. (*What the Thrush Said*, 13).

*Sickly* imagination and *sick* pride (*On Visiting the Tomb of Burns*, 11).

Balance by sequence is likewise rather common in the sonnets of Shakespeare:

Give not a *windy night* a *rainy morrow* (xc).

Weary with toil, I haste me to my bed (xxvii).

In praise of *ladies dead* and *lovely knights* (cvi).

It is also found in Keats's later sonnets:

Will for thine *honour* and his *pleasure* try (*To Spenser*, 14).

Of *thee* I hear and of the *Cyclades* (*To Homer*, 2).

Thou answer'st not; for thou art dead asleep (*To Ailsa Rock*, 9).

Let us inspect the lyre, and weigh the stress ("If by dull rhymes," 7).

Far more frequently Shakespeare achieves balance of line by simple alliteration, as in

When lofty trees I see barren of leaves,  
Which erst from *heat* did canopy the *herd* (xii).

And burn the long-liv'd phoenix in her *blood* (xix).

I sigh the lack of many a thing I sought (xxx).

Such alliterative balance is equally frequent now in Keats:

The *tent* of Hesperus, and all his *train* ("Blue! 'tis the life of heaven," 3).

Read me a *lesson*, Muse, and speak it *loud* (*Upon the Top of Ben Nevis*, 1).

O soft embalmer of the still midnight (*To Sleep*, 1).

Why did I *laugh*? I know this Being's *lease* ("Why did I laugh tonight," 9).

Likewise rather distinctive to Shakespeare's sonnets is a balance of line by antithesis of word, as in

Most worthy *comfort*, now my greatest *grief* (xlvi).

My love is *strengthen'd*, though more *weak* in seeming (cii).

*Love* is my *sin*, and thy dear *virtue* *hate* (cxlii).

This peculiar antithetical balance is very prevalent in Keats's later sonnets:

Felt *parting* and warm *meeting* every week

So could we live *long* life in *little* space

In *little* time a *host* of joys to bind (*To Reynolds*, 2, 5, 11).

To thee the *spring* will be a *harvest-time* (*What the Thrush Said*, 4).

Aye, on the shores of *darkness* there is *light*

There is a triple *sight* in *blindness* keen (*To Homer*, 9, 12).

Thy *life* is but two *dead* eternities—

The *last* in *air*, the *former* in the *deep* (*To Ailsa Rock*, 10-1).

Our *gloom*-pleas'd eyes, embowered from the *light* (*To Sleep*, 3).

And *grief* unto my darling *joys* dost bring ("Time's sea," 14).

The later sonnet of Keats, however, was at best an incidental and occasional form. If there was in Keats a vein which may be designated as pre-eminentlly lyrical, that vein was too richly grave and weightily majestic in temper to find adequate expression within the brief, and for him faulty, rhyme-patterns of the sonnet. And Keats's distinctive excellence as a lyrist lies far less in his sonnets than in that lyrical form for which, in the late spring of 1819, he abandoned the sonnet.

## 5

### THE ODES OF MAY, 1819

Until the time of the composition of the odes, Keats had employed conventional metrical and stanzaic forms which were immediately recognizable. He had in general confined himself to the couplet, blank verse, *ottava rima*, the Spenserian stanza, and, of course, the sonnet. In the remarkable journal-letter to his brother (February 14 to May 3, 1819), however, in which he enclosed the first of the odes, the *Ode to Psyche*, Keats revealed that he had been attempting a totally new stanzaic experiment.



During the month of April, Keats had composed two irregular sonnets, predominantly Shakespearean, but without either the three contiguous alternate rhyming quatrains or the concluding couplet: *To Sleep* (*ababcdcd bc efef*) and the second of the two sonnets *On Fame* (*ababcdcd efeggf*). He now expressed himself as dissatisfied with both the strict Petrarchan and the Shakespearean rhyme-schemes:

I have been endeavouring to discover a better sonnet stanza than we have. The legitimate does not suit the language over-well from the pouncing rhymes—the other kind appears too elegiac—and the couplet at the end of it has seldom a pleasing effect—I do not pretend to have succeeded.<sup>1</sup>

He then copied out a newly-composed sonnet:

If by dull rhymes our English must be chained,  
And, like Adromeda, the Sonnet sweet  
Fettered, in spite of painèd loveliness;  
Let us find out, if we must be constrained,  
Sandals more interwoven and complete  
To fit the naked foot of Poesy:  
Let us inspect the Lyre, and weigh the stress  
Of every chord, and see what may be gained  
By ear industrious, and attention meet;  
Misers of sound and syllable, no less  
Than Midas of his coinage, let us be  
Jealous of dead leaves in the bay wreath crown;  
So, if we may not let the Muse be free,  
She will be bound with garlands of her own.

"I do not pretend to have succeeded,"<sup>2</sup> wrote Keats of this sonnet; and indeed, he wrote only three sonnets thereafter.<sup>3</sup> But it will be observed that this sonnet, of which the rhyme-scheme is *abcabdcabcbdede*, like the other two sonnets of the same month, has neither the couplets of the Petrarchan octave, the concluding couplet of the Shakespearean form, nor the continued alternate-rhyming of the three successive Shakespearean quatrains.

<sup>1</sup> *Letters*, p. 342.

<sup>2</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>3</sup> The burlesque sonnet, "The House of Mourning" in the Petrarchan form, and the two Shakespearean sonnets, "The day is gone," and *To Fanny*.

Mr. H. W. Garrod,<sup>4</sup> in his analysis of the stanzaic structure of the *Ode to Psyche*, has advanced the suggestive conjecture that the ode-stanza of Keats was an outgrowth of the sonnet-form, and that in his construction of the stanza Keats succeeded in eliminating what he disliked in either form of the sonnet and yet at the same time retained from each what he considered of value. The soundness of Garrod's conjecture becomes more apparent with the analysis of all the ode-stanzas. Yet something may be added to what he says, and the connection of the ode-stanza with the sonnet may be even more firmly established.

Garrod assumes that the "legitimate" sonnet to which Keats refers is the Petrarchan, and that the "pouncing rhymes" to which he objects are the couplets of the Petrarchan octave. Such an assumption is certainly justified. Mr. M. R. Ridley, however, has questioned the equation of "legitimate" with Petrarchan:

Now if that sentence [writes Ridley, referring to Keats's statement of his dissatisfaction with the sonnet form] ended at "effect," and was written by anyone but Keats, there could be no doubt of the way to take it; the dashes will mark a parenthesis and we shall have: "The legitimate does not suit the language over-well from the pouncing rhymes (the other kind appears too elegiac) and the couplet at the end of it has seldom a pleasing effect." . . . Keats uses the dash as a kind of perfunctory maid-of-all-work. . . . We can equally well assume that "the other kind appears too elegiac" is a parenthesis<sup>5</sup> in which Keats is dismissing the Petrarchan form from consideration as he had almost entirely dismissed it from his practice. . . . *Prima facie* I should have supposed him a little more likely, in view of his adoption of the Shakespearean sonnet form to have described that form as the "legitimate" rather than the Petrarchan. "Elegiac" is a vague word on which to base much of a conclusion.

As for the "pouncing rhymes," they refer less to the couplets of the Petrarchan octave, says Mr. Ridley, than to the "rapid

<sup>4</sup> *Keats* (1926), pp. 85-90.

<sup>5</sup> As a matter of fact, Keats far more rarely employs dashes as parentheses than as periods, colons, or commas. Further, when Keats makes a sudden break within the body of the sentence, the dash he customarily uses is a short one elevated somewhat above the bottom level of the line; when he employs the dash as a period or semicolon, it is usually even shorter—scarcely more than an elongated dot at times—and placed at the lowest level of the line or else below it. The latter is the case with the dash appearing after "rhymes" (see the *ms.* in the Harvard Keats Memorial Collection); it is unquestionably intended to designate a full stop.

*tick-tack, tick-tack, tock-tuck, tock-tuck* of the alternating rhymes, often emphasized by the monosyllabic rhyme-words."<sup>6</sup>

The word "elegiac" would appear to have been a little more perplexing to critics of Keats than it should. It has usually been regarded as thematic in its reference, while Mr. Ridley believes that it denotes "the grave and sometimes almost melancholy sonority of the Petrarchan form."<sup>7</sup> From the middle of the eighteenth century until a century later, "elegiac" was commonly used in critical and prosodic writing to designate the pentameter *abab* quatrain.<sup>8</sup> Keats himself had employed the quatrain for his early elegiac stanzas *On Death*. In 1838, Guest, in his prosodic history, could still explicitly refer to the quatrain as the "elegiac stave" and add that the Shakespearean sonnet is simply a development of the "elegiac stave."<sup>9</sup> The use of the term is still occasionally found in present-day prosodic writing.

Mr. Ridley's belief that the term "legitimate" refers to the Shakespearean sonnet seems equally unwarranted. The sonnets of the eighteenth century were largely Petrarchan, or else variations from a Petrarchan basis; the Shakespearean form was usually considered a deviation from the norm. The epithets "legitimate" and "Petrarchan" were consequently used interchangeably in the prosodic writing of the eighteenth and early

<sup>6</sup> Ridley, pp. 202-204.

<sup>7</sup> P. 203.

<sup>8</sup> Perhaps owing in part to its similarity to the classical "elegiac distich"—which, with its alternate hexameters and pentameters, produced a definite effect of alternate repetition—the pentameter quatrain, after Hammond's *Love Elegies* (1743), was almost invariably employed for the writing of elegiac verse. After the publication of the elegies of John Scott (1760) and Shenstone (1764), the quatrain ceased to be called "Hammond's meter" and was almost universally designated as the "elegiac quatrain." It was as such that it was employed in the elegies, for example, of Mickle, Graeme, Duncombe, Chatterton, and Cary; and when Blacklock, Langhorne, Jago, Smollett, and the pathetic Michael Bruce had elegies to compose, they followed custom and used the quatrain. Despite Johnson's questioning of the appropriateness of the stanza for elegy—"Why Hammond or other writers have thought the quatrain of ten syllables elegiac, it is difficult to tell" (*Life of Hammond, Lives*, ed. Hill [1905], II, 316)—the use of the stanza increased; sonneteers, like Charlotte Smith, who wrote upon elegiac themes, forsook the Petrarchan form and, in order to approximate the elegiac stave, employed the Shakespearean; Hayley, who had first used the quatrain for elegiac purposes in 1774, continued to do so; Bowles and Helen Maria Williams followed suit; and the 'nineties witnessed an output of elegies even more exclusively in the stanza—notably those of Southey.

<sup>9</sup> *History of English Rhythms*, II, 377-378.

nineteenth centuries.<sup>10</sup> Leigh Hunt, for example, whose influence on Keats's sonnets from the beginning is very marked, employed the terms synonymously in his essay "On the Nature and Property of the Sonnet, Particularly the Sonnet Called the Legitimate."<sup>11</sup>

Keats, then, like Hunt before him,<sup>12</sup> wished to avoid, first, the hurry and snap of the couplets forming the Shakespearean conclusion and the "pouncing rhymes" of the Petrarchan octave, and, second, the continual alternate-rhyming of the three successive "elegiac staves" which form the body of the Shakespearean sonnet. Now it is plain that in his experiments in "How fever'd is the man," *To Sleep*, and particularly the sonnet enclosed in his letter, "If by dull rhymes," Keats is attempting, on the one hand, to do away with the "pouncing rhymes" of the couplets in the Petrarchan octave and of the concluding couplet in the Shakespearean sestet, and, on the other, to tighten and unify the sonnet by freeing it from the looseness which results from the successive alternate-rhyming quatrains of the Shakespearean form. The first of the odes, the *Ode to Psyche*, is constructed with a similar aim. Its first fourteen lines constitute an amended "Shakespearean" sonnet—*abab cd cdeff eef*—and is similar in rhyme-scheme to the first sonnet with which he experimented metrically, "How fevered is the man" (*abab cd cdeff eegf*). The next lines are a broken series, consisting of a quatrain, two couplets, and a dangling line. The following twelve lines, which begin a new division of the ode, consist of a normal Shakespearean sonnet without the concluding couplet. The following fourteen lines are reminiscent in structure of the second of Keats's experiments with the sonnet, *To Sleep*. The rhyme-

<sup>10</sup> Even so popular a sonneteer as Charlotte Smith, who write for the public and not for poets and prosodists, could casually refer to the "legitimate" sonnet and be confident of being at once understood: she justifies her use of the Shakespearean form; for the "legitimate sonnet is ill calculated for our language" (*Elegiac Sonnets*, 1786, Preface, p. iii). Such was the case throughout Keats's own day and even afterwards: Tom Hood's *Rhymester* (ed. of 1882), for example, still maintained that the Petrarchan form alone is "regular and constant" (p. 86); and even the tolerant Edwin Guest considered the Shakespearean a "loose form," by the construction of which the legitimate sonnet had been "trifled with" (*History of English Rhythms*, II, 377).

<sup>11</sup> *Book of the Sonnet* (edd. Hunt and Lee, 1867), I, 8-15.

<sup>12</sup> Hunt had hardly used the Shakespearean form; but it is of some interest that in three of the six appearances of it in the *Juvenilia* (1801) the two concluding lines are not allowed to be couplets.

scheme of that sonnet had consisted of two quatrains, then two lines, apparently dangling but in reality repeating the rhymes of the first quatrain; and finally, a concluding quatrain. The rhyme-scheme of these fourteen lines in the third division of the *Ode to Psyche* consists of two quatrains, the second of which is *c d d c*; and following these, two lines, apparently dangling, but repeating rhymes in the preceding division of the ode, followed by a concluding quatrain, *e f e f*. The concluding division of the ode consists of an exact Shakespearean sonnet, with the couplet removed from the end and placed after the octave in order to break the flow of the continual alternate-rhyming; and, following these fourteen lines, comes a terminating quatrain.

Now the metrical pattern of this ode is more complicated and irregular than that of the other odes. Yet there was nothing haphazard about its construction. Its stanzaic pattern was a very conscious one, and one with which Keats sought to satisfy a definite intention. "Let us," in attempting to improve the form of the sonnet, he had said in the last of his experimental sonnets, "If by dull rhymes,"—

Let us find out, if we must be constrained,  
Sandals more interwoven and complete,  
To fit the naked foot of Poesy:  
Let us inspect the Lyre, and weigh the stress  
Of every chord, and see what may be gain'd  
By ear industrious, and attention meet;  
Misers of sound and syllable, no less  
Than Midas of his coinage . . .

He immediately afterwards turned to the writing of the *Ode to Psyche* and, before copying it out, wrote of it:

The following Poem—the last I have written is the first and only one with which I have taken even moderate pains. I have for the most part dashed off my lines in a hurry. This I have done leisurely—I think it reads the more richly for it.<sup>13</sup>

Yet, despite the care he lavished on the construction of the *Ode to Psyche*, Keats perceived the unneeded complication of its metrical form. He desired a more regular and unified stanza, and devoted himself to developing one which consisted, in the main,

<sup>13</sup> *Letters*, p. 339.

of a single Shakespearean quatrain, *abab*, followed by a strictly Petrarchan sestet, *cdecde*. Such is the rhyme-pattern of the odes *To a Nightingale*, *On Melancholy*, and *On Indolence*;<sup>14</sup> that of the *Ode on a Grecian Urn* differs only in changing the sestets in the first and fifth stanzas to *cdedce* and in the second stanza to *cdecde*.

There is some evidence that, if he indeed developed his ode-stanza from the *disiecta membra* of the two sonnet-forms, Keats may also have had in mind the patterns used in his earlier ode, *Lines on Seeing a Lock of Milton's Hair*, in which he had reverted to rhyme-schemes common in the odes of the preceding century.<sup>15</sup> This evidence, however, hardly discounts the fact that the ode-stanza which Keats now developed was an answer to his misgivings about the two sonnet-forms. The argument is not advanced here that the ode-stanza was necessarily that specific "better sonnet form" which Keats had said he was intending to devise. It is contended only that—whatever other reasons may have helped to dictate his abandonment of the sonnet for

<sup>14</sup> The exceptions are few: the second stanza of the *Ode to a Nightingale* simply continues on with the *a*-rhyme (*abab cad cad*); the last stanza of the *Ode on Melancholy* has *abab cde dce*; the fifth stanza of the *Ode on Indolence* also has *abab cde dce*, and the sixth, *abab cde ced*.

<sup>15</sup> Mr. N. S. Bushnell, "Notes on Professor Garrod's *Keats*," *M.L.N.*, XLIV (1929), 287-196, has pointed out that the first stanza of this poem possesses a rhyme-scheme (*ababccdeed*) also found in Gray, Akenside, Smart, and Langhorne; that the rhyme-scheme of its last stanza (*ababccddcee*) is found in an ode—written, I believe, by William Richardson of Sheffield—which is in Pearch's *Collection*; and that these rhyme-schemes rather than those of the two sonnet-forms were very likely in Keats's mind when he turned to the odes of May, 1819. But rhyme-scheme alone is not very important in fixing form unless coupled with similarity of line-length. The *ababccdeed* pattern was indeed a popular eighteenth-century ode-form, and to the names of previous employers one might add those of Swift, Percy, John and Walter Scott, Wordsworth and others. (Indeed, the use of an ode-stanza composed of four alternate-rhyming lines followed by six others which assume a pattern not unlike a Petrarchan sestet has always been common. Cf., for example, *ababccdde*, in Browne's *Shepherd's Pipe*, Spenser's *Epigram IV*, Herbert's *Church Rents and Schisms*, Carew's *Deposition from Love*, and, afterwards, used by Young, Chatterton, Hunt, Willis, Moore, and Mrs. Hemans. Tom Moore, again, uses simply *abab cddcd* ["From this hour"]; Mrs. Hemans uses *abab cde dec*; and following Herbert (*The Pearl*) both Campbell and Moore employed *abab cdecde*. The pattern Mr. Bushnell cites from Pearch's *Collection* is a very infrequent one, but in accordance with the same principle of ode-construction.) But all of these ode-patterns were extremely irregular in length, as were the forms used in the *Lines on Seeing a Lock of Milton's Hair*. If precedent must be found, more warrant is forthcoming in simply establishing connection with the Augustan ten-line pentameter ode, with its concluding Alexandrine, the rhyme-scheme *abab cdddee*, and used, for example, by Lowth, Denton, Boyse, Whitehead, Chatterton, and later Mrs. Hemans.

the ode—he was dissatisfied with both the Petrarchan and Shakespearean rhyme-schemes; that he was seeking

Sandals more *interwoven* and *complete*  
To fit the naked foot of Poesy;

that what he desired to avoid in both sonnet-forms is absent in the ode-stanza as it was finally developed; and that other parts of the Petrarchan and Shakespearean sonnets are present in the stanza.

Keats, then, disliked the "pouncing rhymes" of the Petrarchan octave and of the Shakespearean final couplet because of the forced hurry and almost epigrammatic quickness of their effect. He preferred a more leisurely pace; "I think it reads the more richly for it," he said of the *Ode to Psyche*. He was aware, at the same time, of the tendency of the Shakespearean sonnet to fall into a sharp division of three quatrains and a couplet, with a resulting synthetic effect. He disliked, too, the laxity and "elegiac" languor which characterizes continual alternate-rhyming; his liking for a tightly-unified stanza had contributed largely to his having experimented as much as he did with *ottava rima* and the Spenserian stanza. It was his intention to devise a stanzaic medium which would be at once slow in movement, without the hurried "pouncing rhymes" of the couplet, and at the same time unified, closely-knit, and restraining in effect—a stanza truly "more interwoven and complete," and one of which "the rise, the progress," would be slow and satisfying, by no means leaving "the reader breathless instead of content," and which at last "sets soberly although in magnificence." "I think Poetry," Keats had written to Taylor more than a year before,

Should surprise by a fine excess and not by Singularity. . . . Its touches of Beauty should never be half way thereby making the reader breathless instead of content: the rise, the progress, the setting of imagery should like the Sun come natural to him—shine over him and set soberly although in magnificence leaving him in the luxury of twilight.<sup>15</sup>

The evolution of this stanza, which restrains the fullness of Keats's lines and strengthens his luxury, is in itself almost the

<sup>15</sup> Feb. 27, 1818, *Letters*, p. 108.

*ne plus ultra* of that striving for a heavily weighted and condensed completeness of presentation which characterizes in so large a measure the entire stylistic development of Keats after *Isabella*, and through which he sought to satisfy his yearning for an almost physically felt intensity of image and of sound. But the development of this stanza was only a part of Keats's prosodic attainment in that notable month in the late spring of 1819. For Keats's inherent and even sensuous craving for a ripe and heavily laden completeness led him also, as never before, to employ a rhythm and draw upon a diction the very phonetic qualities of which would heighten the richness of his stanzas and, at the same time, to make use of whatever metrical means would achieve a classical rigor and severity of structure.

Wariness of whatever might threaten the integrity of the line is in every way apparent. Inversion of accent is by now almost confined to the initially inverted foot (3.2%)<sup>17</sup>—

*Singest* / of summer in full-throated ease (*Night.*, 10)—

which was traditionally legitimate and extolled. But medial inversion—

When old / *age shall* / this gen / erat / ion waste (*Urn*, 46)—

which had been so prevalent in *Endymion* (1.7%), and which had increasingly diminished, is present now with a rarity equalled only in the strictest Augustan verse: if the faulty *Ode on Indolence* (2.3%),<sup>18</sup> which Keats excluded from the 1820 volume, be omitted, medial inversion is now found in only .4%<sup>19</sup> of the feet. The line is kept unbroken, as a rule, and few double or triple cæsuras (6%)<sup>20</sup> are present, as in

The grass, (x) the thicket, (x) and the fruit-tree wild (*Night.*, 45).

The pauses are predominantly masculine, and as never before the strict fourth-syllable cæsura is employed:<sup>21</sup>

<sup>17</sup> (46); figured from the five odes of May: *Psyche*: 2.2% (7); *Indolence*: 3% (9); *Nightingale*: 4.9% (19); *Melancholy*: 2.7% (4); *Urn*: 2.8% (7).

<sup>18</sup> (7).

<sup>19</sup> (5): *Psyche*: .8% (3); *Nightingale*: 0; *Urn*: .4% (1).

<sup>20</sup> 6% (16). In the cæsural counts of the five odes of May, 20 short lines have been omitted.

<sup>21</sup> The cæsural placing is in a sense almost the logical end towards which that of *Hyperion*, the *Eve of St. Agnes*, and the later sonnets had been directed, and is in



Though seen of none (x) save him whose strenuous tongue  
Can burst Joy's grape (x) against his palate fine (*Mel.*, 27-28).

What little town (x) by river or sea-shore,  
Or mountain-built (x) with peaceful citadel (*Urn.*, 35-36).

Run-on lines are infrequent (24%).<sup>22</sup> If one excludes the *Ode to Psyche*, moreover, in which they are intentionally used in the short lines, feminine endings, which had been one of the chief banes of the 1817 volume, occur only twice (.6%).<sup>23</sup>

If these lines are severely rigorous in structure, they are none the less characterized by a rich and heavy phonetic body. I have repeatedly emphasized the extent to which the relatively polysyllabic diction of Keats's early verse, often Latin in origin, was gradually supplanted with words comparatively shorter, more native in origin, and stronger in consonantal texture. This replacement is carried even farther in the odes.<sup>24</sup> Latinity is also lowered even further: that of the *Ode to a Nightingale*, for example, is 10½%, and that of the *Ode on Melancholy* is 12%. Even the non-native words of these odes, in contrast to those, say, in Shelley's lyrics—such as "commotion," "enchanter," "universe," and "incantation"—are short and almost as consonantal as words of Germanic origin: "beaker," "fruit," "dryad," "musk-rose," "pards," and the like. The shortness of words in the odes, like the prevalence of words of native origin, is symptomatic of Keats's fondness and instinctive reaching for words of greater consonantal strength, which necessitate more time in the pronunciation—words such as "glut," "grape," "tight-rooted," and "deep-delvèd."<sup>25</sup>

In the use of consonants, moreover, is often found a syzygy of consonantal types such as Sidney Lanier has described.<sup>26</sup> To

striking contrast to that of the early sonnets and couplets: after 2nd syll: 2.6% (2); 3rd: 6.3% (17); 4th: 29.9% (80); 5th: 22% (60); 6th: 21.4% (57); 7th: 9.7% (26); 8th: 1.1% (3). See above, for the caesural placing of the early sonnets (pp. 15-16), the early couplets (pp. 26-27), and *Hyperion* (pp. 75-76).

<sup>22</sup> (69).

<sup>23</sup> Cf. the 24% in the couplets of the 1817 volume.

<sup>24</sup> In the odes, *To a Nightingale* and *On Melancholy*, 22% (181) words are of more than one syllable, or a drop of one-fifth from *Endymion*, while only 4½% (38) are of more than two syllables—a drop of over a third from *Endymion*.

<sup>25</sup> For instance, of the 76 words in the opening stanza of the *Ode on Melancholy*, only 5 begin with a vowel ("its," "of," "a," "and," "anguish"). Words concluding with consonants are almost as frequent; for the poem as a whole, they total 77.2%.

<sup>26</sup> *Science of English Verse* (1897), pp. 306-308.

take the consonants *b*, *p*, and *v*, for example, which musically inclined poets have often employed syzygically and which Lanier especially stressed: in the first stanza of the *Grecian Urn*, they appear with no great frequency, and have little connection (*bvpbvvpvppppb*). But the second stanza has many:

Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard  
 Are sweeter; therefore, ye soft *p*ipes, *p*lay on;  
 Not to the sensual ear, but, more endeared,  
*P*ipe to the spirit ditties of no tone:  
 Fair youth, beneath the trees, thou canst not leave  
 Thy song, nor ever can those trees be bare;  
*B*old Lover, never, never canst thou kiss,  
 Though winning near the goal—yet, do not grieve;  
 She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss,  
 For ever wilt thou love, and she be fair!

Here there is an alternation which is rather regular and which can almost be grouped: *pppb pppb vbbbv vbb vb*. Such an alternation is found in the third stanza as well: *ppbv bppv pvpv pvvb vp vbp vbp*; but in the remaining two stanzas, as in the first, these consonants appear too rarely to assume syzygical connection. It may be added that this use of consonantal syzygy occasionally assumes a kind of balance (as in the first stanza of the *Ode to a Nightingale*, *bpu pppvv pb pppbb*); but such balance is rough and infrequent enough to appear coincidental.

While emphasizing the change of phonetic body in Keats's verse, and dwelling upon its increasing consonantal texture, it should be pointed out that liquid consonants, which by no means hinder the rapidity of a line's flow but indeed facilitate it, seem to decrease until after the writing of the odes. Replacing them are stronger varieties of consonants, particularly the bilabials, *m*, *b*, and *p*, which, as English prosodists have noted for almost two centuries, often tend to enrich euphony and retard the line tempo. Characteristic is the interplay of bilabials in the *Ode on Melancholy*, with its "globèd *p*eonies," "can burst Joy's grape against his *p*alate fine," its "aching *P*leasure nigh, Turning to *p*oison while the bee-mouth sips," and its entire first stanza:

No, no, go not to Lethe, neither twist  
 Wolf's-bane, tight-rooted, for its poisonous wine;

Nor suffer thy *pale* forehead to *be* kiss'd  
 By nightshade, ruby grape of *Proserpine*;  
 Make not your rosary of yew-berries,  
 Nor let the beetle, nor the death-moth *be*  
 Your mournful *Psyche*, nor the downy owl  
 A partner in your sorrow's mysteries;  
 For shade to shade will come too drowsily,  
 And drown the wakeful anguish of the soul.

Or again:

O for a beaker full of the warm South,  
 Full of the true, the blushful *Hippocrene*,  
 With beaded *bubbles* winking at the brim,  
 And purple-stained mouth.

Not charioted by *Bacchus* and his *pard*s,  
 But on the viewless wings of *Poesy*,  
 Though the dull brain *perplexes* and *retards* (*Nightingale*,  
 15-18, 32-34).

The use of bilabials is far more extensive in the odes than in the earlier lyrics.<sup>27</sup> They are further strengthened by their proximity with historically "long" vowels, as in "*time*," "*rhyme*," "*pain*," "*foam*," "*home*," "*deep*," or as in

But when the melancholy fit shall fall  
 Sudden from heaven like a *weeping* cloud,  
 That fosters the *droop*-headed flowers all,  
 And hides the green hill in an *April* shroud;  
 Then glut thy sorrow on a *morning* rose,  
 Or on the *rainbow* of a salt sand-wave,  
 Or on the wealth of globed *peonies*

And feed, *deep*, *deep* upon her *peerless* eyes (*Mel.*, 11-17, 20).

A total of 20% of the bilabials in the early sonnets<sup>28</sup> are in conjunction with "long" vowels; the amount is four times as great—83% (153)—in the odes.

<sup>27</sup> In seven characteristic sonnets of the 1817 volume (*To My Brother George*, *Written the Day*, *To a Friend Who Sent Me Some Roses*, *Grasshopper and the Cricket*, *To Kosciuszko*, "Great spirits now," "Keen, fitful gusts"), bilabials appear 102 times, or almost exactly once for every line. In the odes *To a Nightingale*, *On a Grecian Urn*, and *On Melancholy*, however, they appear 272 times, or an average of 1.66 a line—a rise of 66%.

<sup>28</sup> Figured from the sonnets and odes listed in the previous note.

Indeed, intensified and sonorous vowels are drawn upon at every hand. "I cannot *tell*" was altered to

I cannot *see* what flowers are at my feet.

In the replacement of

To toll me back from thee unto myself

with

To toll me back from thee to my sole self,

whatever other gain accrues is accompanied by one in tenseness of vowel, while a similar accompaniment is found in the transition from "cluster'd bubbles" to "beaded bubbles."<sup>29</sup>

As in all of Keats's verse written after *Isabella* and before *Lamia*, stress-failure is used with no great frequency;<sup>30</sup> but abundant use is made of the spondee:

Cool'd a / long age / in the / deep-delv / ed earth (*Night.*, 12).

Where pals / y shakes / a few, / sad, last, / gray hairs (*Ib.*, 25).

Wolf's-bane, / tight-root / ed, for / its pois / onous wine (*Mel.*, 2)

What mad / pursuit? / What strugg / le to / escape?

What pipes / and timb / rels? What / wild ecs / tasy (*Urn*, 9-10).

This increasing use of spondees—perhaps the most noteworthy single metrical peculiarity of Keats's maturer verse—which had been shown in the rise from 2.6% in *Endymion* through 5% in *Isabella* to 11.7% and 10.1% in *Hyperion* and the *Eve of St. Agnes* respectively, attains an average of 11.2% (16) in these five odes; and the frequency in each would seem to stand in

<sup>29</sup> Accented vowels of this sort, which had gradually rise to 25.3% in *Hyperion* and later reached the quite unusual total of 27.6% in the *Eve of St. Agnes* (see above, pp. 116-117), amount to no less than 28.7% (86) in the *Ode on Melancholy*, and I question whether this frequency is much surpassed in any other English lyric of similar length.

<sup>30</sup> It appears in 8.4% of the feet: *Psyche*: 7% (27); *Indolence*: 9.6% (29); *Nightingale*: 8.3% (33); *Melancholy*: 12.7% (14); *Urn*: 8.8% (22).

almost direct proportion to the comparative phonetic richness and strength of each ode:

<i>Ode on Indolence:</i>	10.6% (32)
<i>Ode to Psyche:</i>	11.8% (37)
<i>Ode to a Nightingale:</i>	12.4% (48)
<i>Ode on Melancholy:</i>	14.7% (22)
<i>Ode on a Grecian Urn:</i>	14.8% (37) <sup>31</sup>

Spondaic feet are used once again, as in *Hyperion* and the *Eve of St. Agnes*, with an effect almost onomatopoeic or pictorial in its suggestion. After the somewhat processional and heavy beat, for example, of unrelieved iambs—

˘ ˘ / ˘ ˘ / ˘ ˘ / ˘ ˘ / ˘ ˘ / ˘ ˘ / ˘ ˘ /  
No voice, / no lute, / no pipe, / no in / cense sweet—

spondees may give a pause:

˘ ˘ / ˘ ˘ / ˘ ˘ / ˘ ˘ / ˘ ˘ / ˘ ˘ /  
From chain- / swung cens / er teeming;  
˘ ˘ / ˘ ˘ / ˘ ˘ / ˘ ˘ / ˘ ˘ / ˘ ˘ /  
No shrine, / no grove, / no or / acle, / no heat

˘ ˘ / ˘ ˘ / ˘ ˘ / ˘ ˘ / ˘ ˘ / ˘ ˘ /  
From pale- / mouth'd proph / et dreaming (*Psyche*, 32-35).

Or again—to violate chronology and go forward to the ode, *To Autumn*, of September, 1819,—spondees may momentarily stay the flow of rhythm—

˘ ˘ / ˘ ˘ / ˘ ˘ / ˘ ˘ / ˘ ˘ / ˘ ˘ / ˘ ˘ /  
Then, in / a wail / ful choir, / the small / gnats mourn—

until, after this hovering delay and with a comparative renewal of impetus, the “wailful choir” continues, as though with a kind of unison, in unrelieved iambs—

˘ ˘ / ˘ ˘ / ˘ ˘ / ˘ ˘ / ˘ ˘ / ˘ ˘ /  
Among / the riv / er sal / lows, borne / aloft

˘ ˘ / ˘ ˘ /  
Or sink / ing . . . (27-29).

<sup>31</sup> Cf. also the rather extreme number in *To Autumn*, written the following September: 13.9% (23)—approximately five and a third times the frequency in *Endymion*, or a rise, in other words, of about 430%.

As is frequent in Keats, spondees are used in connection with slow flight, as in

˘ ˘ / ˘ ˘ / ˘ ˘ / ˘ ˘ / ˘ ˘ /  
Away! / away! / for I / will fly / to thee,

˘ ˘ / (˘)˘˘ / ˘ ˘ / ˘ ˘ / ˘ ˘ / ˘ ˘ /  
Not char / ioted / by Bacch / us and / his pards

˘ ˘ / ˘ ˘ / ˘ ˘ / ˘ ˘ / ˘ ˘ / ˘ ˘ /  
But on / the view / less wings / of Po / esy,

˘ ˘ / ˘ ˘ / ˘ ˘ / ˘ ˘ / ˘ ˘ / ˘ ˘ / ˘ ˘ /  
Though the / dull brain / perplex / es and / retards (*Night.*,  
31-34).

Again, to take but one more instance, it would almost seem as if, in the final stanza of the *Ode to a Nightingale*, the distinctive use of scattered spondees, together with initial inversion, lend an approximate phonetic suggestion of the peculiar spring and bounce of the bird in its flight:

˘ ˘ / ˘ ˘ / ˘ ˘ / ˘ ˘ / ˘ ˘ / ˘ ˘ /  
Adieu! / Adieu! / thy plain / tive an / them fades

˘ ˘ / ˘ ˘ / ˘ ˘ / ˘ ˘ / ˘ ˘ / ˘ ˘ / ˘ ˘ /  
Past the / near mead / ows, ov / er the / still stream,

˘ ˘ / ˘ ˘ / ˘ ˘ / ˘ ˘ / ˘ ˘ / ˘ ˘ /  
Up the / hill-side; / and now / 'tis bur / ied deep

˘ ˘ / ˘ ˘ / ˘ ˘ / ˘ ˘ /  
In the / next vall / ey-glades.

I shall not re-emphasize what was earlier said, in the discussion of the *Eve of St. Agnes*,<sup>32</sup> about the greatly increased use of *ed*-ending epithets in the verse Keats wrote between *Isabella* and *Lamia*. It is enough to point out that they are abundantly present in the odes,<sup>33</sup> and that—as in “cool-rooted flowers,” “deep-delvèd earth,” “full-throated ease,” “sunburnt mirth,” and “emblamèd darkness”—all that may be poetically said of

<sup>32</sup> See above, pp. 95-97.

<sup>33</sup> 16% of the total number of adjectives in the *Urn*, *Nightingale*, and *Melancholy*. Epithets ending in *y* (excluding the six almost consecutive appearances of the word “happy” in the third stanza of the *Grecian Urn*) are still low (7%) after the radical excision of them in *Hyperion* and the *Eve of St. Agnes* (see above, pp. 96-97).

the peculiar and distinctive qualities of these substantives has, by their epithets constructed from passive participles, been concentrated and indelibly stamped upon them. Again, in the *Ode on Melancholy*, Keats does not now write "globe-like peonies." He goes farther, and calls the peonies "globèd," and the hand is almost cupping the peony, compressing it further to fit its "globèd" roundness. Similarly, this "miser of sound and syllable," who sought to "load every rift . . . with ore," altered "*Cooling* an age . . ." to

*Cool'd* a long age in the deep-delvèd earth.

The "draught of vintage" is, in this revision, no longer an actively performing subject: it has become the recipient of that action, and coolness has been concentrated within it.

"Poesy," Keats had long since written in *Sleep and Poetry*, is

the supreme of power;  
'Tis might half slumb'ring on its own right arm (236-237).

It was this highly dynamic power, caught momentarily in repose, and constrained and imprisoned still further in the bonds of art, which Keats now sought above all else to attain. For however impassioned may be the intensity of epithet and image in the odes, and however rich and heavy the music with which they are fraught, the form of the odes is one of strict sobriety and of a classical restraint. Such a restraint, with its resultant heightening of density, is unquestionably owing in some degree to the stanzaic structure, the contribution of which is well illustrated by the *Ode on a Grecian Urn*. For the *Grecian Urn* possesses a quiet and constrained composure hardly equalled by the other odes of this month and perhaps even unsurpassed by the ode *To Autumn* of the following September. Yet its diction is less consonantal; its excessive employment of spondees is rivalled by the *Ode on Melancholy*; accented sonorous vowels and epithets constructed from the passive verb are less common than in some of the other odes. Its verbs, moreover, are active rather than passive: "What struggle to escape?"; "Therefore, ye soft pipes, play on"; "Though winning near the goal"; "Forever piping songs forever new"; "forever panting"; "Who are these coming to the sacrifice?" Yet there is a severe repose about the *Ode on a*

*Grecian Urn*; it is both "interwoven" and "complete"; and within its tensely braced stanzas is a potential energy momentarily stilled and imprisoned. Like Cleopatra's

*Eternity was in our lips and eyes* (I, iii, 35),

a line which was strongly marked and underscored by Keats in his copy of Shakespeare, and which is heavy with the concentration within concrete particulars of all the suggestion eternity can convey, the *Grecian Urn* is weighted with a condensed energy heightened the more because of its compactness; and it, too, is tremulously heavy with an eternity intensified and compressed within a particular. And this strict and staid repose of the *Grecian Urn*, its intense but static "might half slumb'ring on its own right arm," is largely owing to the remarkable stanzaic medium which Keats had devised for it: a stanza at once leisurely and majestic in movement, without the "pouncing rhymes" of the couplet, and at the same time unified, closely knit, and restraining in temper and form.

Keats's stylistic achievement from the time of the writing of *Hyperion*, in the autumn of 1818, until the completion of the odes of May, 1819, is in the direction of inevitability of phrase and enrichment of imagery and euphony, and at the same time of discipline and restraint. The progress towards each is interwoven with that towards the other, and they are each manifestations of a common tendency: an almost physical craving, as I have been emphasizing, for the utmost "intensity" of poetical experience—an intensity, as Keats now perceived, which might be imprisoned and preserved within the confines of art and which might be fully felt and known only through the most rigorous economy, condensation, and constraint. Such an "intensity" was indeed a state of refined sensation, desirable largely in and for itself. Chronologically its final and intrinsically its highest realization is to be found in the odes of May, 1819, and these odes may very well be designated as both the climax and the conclusion of the entire technical nature and direction of Keats's verse which had first made itself consummately apparent in the blank verse of *Hyperion* during the previous autumn.



### III

#### AN UNCOMPLETED TRANSITION

"I have of late been moulting: not for fresh feathers and wings: they are gone, and in their stead I hope to have a pair of patient sublunary legs."

—Letter to Reynolds, July, 1819.

"Some think I have lost that poetic ardour and fire 'tis said I once had—the fact is perhaps I have: but instead of that I hope I shall substitute a more thoughtful and quiet power."

—Letter to George and Georgiana Keats,  
September, 1819.

Immediately after the composition of the odes, the first concrete manifestation is found in Keats's verse of a remarkable change which seems to have taken place in his entire conception of the nature and purpose of poetry, a change which, for its suddenness and completeness, is not easily paralleled in any other poet. I shall not pretend to account even superficially for the cause or causes of this change, and would simply pause to summarize the bent of mind from which Keats's two subsequent major poems took technical form and direction.

The meaning of *Lamia*, which Keats began in July, 1819, has perhaps elicited more controversy than any other single problem raised by his verse. Until within the last two decades, the poem was often interpreted as simply signifying a Romantic poet's petulance against "science," "philosophy," or even "thought" in general. *Lamia* herself was almost regarded as representing whatever was beautiful or poetically desirable; Lycius, her lover, was understood to represent the poet; and the grave and sinister philosopher, Apollonius, who dispels the enchantment which

Lamia has thrown over Lycius, was taken to be the cold and unnecessary voice of reason. Although the possible injustice of this conception of the poem has by no means been so definitely established during the last few years as to render unnecessary any further argument against it, no such argument will here be advanced. Suffice to it say that there is as much if not more reason to regard Lamia, however beautiful, as both the serpent and phantasm she is said to be. The philosopher Apollonius has few charms to commend him, but he has at least the virtue of reality; and it is necessary that Lycius—who, at his present stage, would “die of a rose in aromatic pain,” and who is precisely the sort of poet so bitterly condemned in the revised *Fall of Hyperion*, which was being written at the same time—be released from the enchantment of the phantasm, even if the release kills him.<sup>1</sup>

It would indeed appear that, perhaps in theme as certainly in form, *Lamia* represents the first poetic crystallization of a transition of mind which may very probably have begun as early as *Sleep and Poetry*, but which, even in the letters, had not received any really definite expression until shortly before the odes, in the spring of 1819. The theme of *Hyperion* is the optimistic hope that somehow a perfect state will replace present imperfection; that “beauty” will eventually be synonymous with “might.” But during the spring of 1819, Keats’s general attitude became far less confident, although this change did not become conclusive or manifest in his verse before July. Indications of this decrease in confidence may be found in the long journal letter to George and Georgiana Keats, dated from February 14 to May 3. “Evil,” he now perceives, is both inherent and necessary in nature; otherwise “the Hawk would lose his Breakfast of Robins and the Robin his of Worms.”<sup>2</sup> Since pain

<sup>1</sup> There is enough evidence, in fact, on either side of the question to warrant the conclusion that Keats had really no definite standpoint at all, and that the fable is no more than simply a restatement without answer of the questions—certainly much in his mind during these months—whether poetry was genuinely reconcilable with philosophy, whether such a reconciliation is not absolutely necessary for the validity of poetry, and which of the two, if reconciliation is impossible, is preferable. But discussion of the problem has perhaps more pertinence to another contemplated study, for which it has been deferred.

<sup>2</sup> *Letters*, p. 316. Cf. with the earlier *Epistle to Reynolds*, where Keats decried  
The Shark at savage prey, the Hawk at pounce,  
The gentle Robin, like a Pard or Ounce,  
Ravening a worm (103-105).

and sorrow are inextricably interwoven with the texture of life, it is necessary—if the concrete world is to be understood—that suffering as well as joy be experienced: "Until we are sick, we understand not."<sup>3</sup> It is only thus that one can become a "soul" and not remain merely a "spark of intelligence."<sup>4</sup> "Nothing ever becomes real," he insisted, "till it is experienced—even a Proverb is no proverb to you until your life has illustrated it." The experience gained in the world is highly practical, and is indeed the only means of acquiring the wisdom necessary to deepen and enlarge the heart and intensify its capacity to sympathize and understand:

I will call the world [Keats continues] a school instituted for the purpose of teaching little children how to read—I will call the *human heart* the *horn book* used in that school—and I will call the *child able to read*, the *Soul* made from that *School* and its *hornbook*. Do you not see how necessary a World of Pains and troubles is to school an Intelligence and make it a Soul? A Place where the heart must feel and suffer in a thousand diverse ways. Not merely is the Heart a Hornbook, it is the Mind's experience.<sup>5</sup>

On the day that he began this letter (February 14) Keats wrote, "I have not gone on with *Hyperion*." The idealistic confidence of *Hyperion* had little meaning for him any longer. It was on the sixteenth of April that he wrote the passages just quoted. Four days later he decided definitely never to go on with *Hyperion*, and handed the unfinished manuscript to Woodhouse.

As a consequence, the "intensity" which Keats was always extolling, and which, despite the doubts of this letter, found its ultimate embodiment in the odes of the following month; this "electric fire," as Keats called it, this hidden and elusive intention and meaning at work within a particular, which gives every object and every creature its identity and its peculiar nature, and which is indeed its "beauty" and its "truth"—all this, however excellent and however truly the fit subject for poetry, is not enough:

May there not be superior beings amused with any graceful though instinctive attitude my mind may fall into, as I am entertained with

<sup>3</sup> *Letters*, p. 172.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 336.

<sup>5</sup> *Loc. cit.*

the alertness of a Stoat or the anxiety of a Deer? Though a quarrel in the Streets is a thing to be hated, the energies displayed in it are fine; the commonest man shows a grace in his quarrel—By a superior being our reasonings may take the same tone—though erroneous they may be fine—*This is the very thing in which consists poetry; and if so, it is not so fine a thing as philosophy*—For the same reason that an eagle is not so fine a thing as a truth.<sup>6</sup>

Such assertions, however, as Keats himself said of them, were merely indications of his "straining at particles in the midst of a great darkness—without knowing the bearing of any one assertion on any one opinion";<sup>7</sup> and the transition of mind of which they are anticipatory symptoms did not crystallize until immediately after the composition of the odes. In a letter written to Miss Jeffrey early in June, Keats reiterated the necessity of experience, but added that it is foolhardy to seek it deliberately:

One of the great reasons that the English have produced the finest writers in the world is, that the English world has ill-treated them during their lives and foster'd them after their deaths. They have in general been trampled into the bye paths of life and seen the festerings of society. They have not been treated like the Raphaels of Italy. . . . [Boiardo] was a noble Poet of Romance; not a miserable and mighty Poet of the human Heart. The middle age of Shakespeare was all clouded over; his days were not more happy than Hamlet's . . . Ben Jonson was a common soldier, and in the Low Countries, in the face of two armies, fought a single combat with a French Trooper and slew him—For all this I will not go on board an Indiaman, nor for example's sake run my head into dark alleys: I dare say my discipline is to come, and plenty of it too. . . . I hope I am a little more of a Philosopher than I was, consequently less of a versifying Pet-lamb.<sup>8</sup>

A month later he wrote to Reynolds:

I have of late been moulting; not for fresh feathers and wings: they are gone, and in their stead I hope to have a pair of patient sublunary legs.<sup>9</sup>

It was in this frame of mind that Keats, in July, 1819, turned to the composition of *Lamia*. With his conception of the neces-

<sup>6</sup> *Letters*, p. 317.

<sup>7</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>8</sup> *Letters*, p. 347.

<sup>9</sup> July 11, 1819, *ibid.*, p. 358.

sity of hardship and experience and a somewhat changed interpretation of the meaning of the word "reality" uppermost in his mind, he transformed the little tale he had found in the *Anatomy of Melancholy* into what may very well be an almost dogmatically moral allegory. He seems to reiterate that the true poet must not lose himself in the world of the luxurious but, if he is really to know life, must be continually mindful of the sorrow and pain of his fellow-beings. "A fine writer is the most genuine Being in the World," Keats wrote to Bailey while engaged in writing *Lamia*,—"excepting the human friend *Philosopher*."<sup>10</sup>

## I

## LAMIA

After its completion in the following September, Keats was confident that *Lamia* had none of the "inexperience of life" which, for him, marred *Isabella* and even the *Eve of St. Agnes*; and it possessed a "fire," in theme as well as form, which would certainly "take hold of people in some way," whether pleasantly or unpleasantly:

I will give you a few reasons why I shall persist in not publishing The Pot of Basil. It is too smokeable. . . . There is too much inexperience of life, and simplicity of knowledge in it. . . . *There is no objection of this kind to Lamia*—A good deal to *St. Agnes Eve*—only not so glaring.<sup>1</sup>

I have been reading over a short poem I have composed lately called "*Lamia*"—and I am certain there is that sort of fire in it which must take hold of people in some way—give them either pleasant or unpleasant sensation.<sup>2</sup>

The metrical form in which Keats decided to cast his fable was almost as different from his preceding verse as was its theme. He had not used the couplet since *Endymion*; he had employed, except for the blank verse of *Hyperion*, more elaborate meters, most of them stanzaic. He now, however, wished a simpler measure—for elaboration, "more interwoven and complete," was far from his purpose—and he reverted once again to the

<sup>10</sup> August 14, 1819, *ibid.*, p. 368.

<sup>1</sup> To Woodhouse, Sept. 21, 1819, *ibid.*, p. 391.

<sup>2</sup> To George and Georgiana Keats, September 17 to 27, 1819, *ibid.*, p. 402.

simplest of rhymed narrative meters, the heroic couplet. Yet the couplet as here used is not the highly run-on and often languorous and formless couplet which Hunt had made popular and which Keats had followed in *Endymion* and his other early poems. With no risk of monotony, the integrity of each line is carefully preserved, the couplet itself is tightened, and the flow of the movement is much more rapid than in any of Keats's preceding or subsequent verse. Condensation of phrase is also here. But its character is not native to Keats: intensity of epithet and image are not a part of it, nor is it the concentration of impassioned richness rigidly but majestically controlled. The imagery is almost entirely visual; and its colors and outlines are vivid, hard, and even brittle:

She was a gordian shape of dazzling hue,  
Vermillion-spotted, golden, green, and blue;  
Striped like a zebra, freckled like a pard;  
Eyed like a peacock, and all crimson barr'd;  
And full of silver moons, that, as she breath'd,  
Dissolved, or brighter shone, or interwreathed  
Their lustres with the gloomier tapestries (I, 47-53)

Upon her crest she wore a wannish fire  
Sprinkled with stars, like Ariadne's tiar (I, 57-58).

The colours all inflam'd throughout her train,  
She writh'd about, convuls'd with scarlet pain:  
A deep volcanian yellow took the place  
Of all her milder-moonèd body's grace;  
And, as the lava ravishes the mead,  
Spoilt all her silver mail, and golden brede,  
Made gloom of all her frecklings, streaks, and bars,  
Eclips'd her crescents, and lick'd up her stars (I, 153-160).

In direct contrast, moreover, to the verse written after *Isabella* and before the conclusion of the odes, few epithets in this strange poem appeal to any sense other than that of sight—even fewer, perhaps, than in *Endymion*; and illustration may be at once given if the frequency of such epithets in earlier verse be recapitulated here with that in *Lamia*:

	Touch	Taste	Smell	Hearing
<i>Endymion</i> , I:	1.6% (19)	.3% (4)	.1½% (2)	1.1% (14)
<i>Isabella</i> :	6.5% (36)	1.1% (6)	.7% (4)	1.3% (7)
<i>Hyperion</i> , I:	7.1% (26)	.2% (1)	.7% (3)	4.5% (18)
<i>Eve of St. Agnes</i> :	8.5% (39)	1.3% (6)	.9% (4)	.5% (23)
<i>Lamia</i> , I: <sup>3</sup>	2.9% (13)	.5% (2)	0	.5% (2)

Absence of imaginative concentration in the epithets of *Lamia* is also illustrated by the return of the *y*-ending adjective (9%)<sup>4</sup> to almost as great a frequency as in *Isabella*. Although numerous when compared with their appearance in the verse of other poets, *ed*-ending epithets have considerably dropped (16.8%)<sup>5</sup> as compared, for example, with 19% in *Hyperion* and 24.9% in the *Eve of St. Agnes*. Keats would seem, indeed, to have made a conscious effort to avoid these epithets, by now almost habitual with him. Thus, for example, "*mission'd* dart" (I, 78) was altered to "*bright Phoebean* dart"; "*devout, bright-ton'd*" (I, 114) became "*warm, tremulous, devout*"; "*amid the buzz'd* alarm" (II, 61) had substituted for it "*amid the hoarse* alarm"; and "*teeming, wing'd* odours" (II, 133)—to take but one more instance—was changed to simply "*teeming with odours*." In such passive participial epithets as are used, moreover, there is no effect—as in "*branch-charm'd*," "*warm'd* jewels," and the like—of energy caught momentarily at rest and condensed and imprisoned within an otherwise static image, with a consequent gain in strength and intensity. They are much more conventional, and have nothing about them which momentarily stays the reader in his course, making his delay irresistible, and demanding that he conceive rather than perceive, that he linger to grasp fully rather than pass on after quick recognition: "*crown'd*," "*clasp'd*," "*glaz'd*," "*bow'd*," "*flush'd*," "*lute-finger'd*," "*smooth-lipp'd*," "*stoop'd*," and the like. And just as there is a marked decrease in static, but potentially dynamic, epithets there is a rise in active participial adjectives, as in "*full-flowering* weed" (I, 44), "*palpitating* snake" (I, 45),

<sup>3</sup> Figured against the total number of adjectives in Book I (444). For the detail on counts other than that of *Lamia*, see above, p. 94.

<sup>4</sup> (40); figured against the total number of adjectives in Book I. For discussion of Keats's use of *ed*-ending epithets, see above, pp. 95-97, in the analysis of the *Eve of St. Agnes*.

<sup>5</sup> (75).

"dazzling hue" (I, 47), or as when Keats—who before had made precisely opposite alterations, changing "fading moon," for example, to "faded moon" in the *Eve of St. Agnes*—substitutes for "The high-lamp'd banquet-room" (II, 121) "The glowing banquet-room."

The diction, moreover, is phonetically as well as connotatively dissimilar to that of the odes, and the rhythm is of a regularly varied pattern new to Keats. The assumption of such a prosody—metrical, verbal, and phonetic—was in some respects, at least, a conscious one, and is in rather large part explained by the peculiar transition which had taken place in Keats's entire conception of the nature and purpose of poetry. I have earlier illustrated at some length that both the increasing shortness and native origin of the words in the verse written after *Endymion* contributed appreciably in retarding the flow of movement and augmenting the strength of phonetic body;—although it should be re-emphasized that such matters as Latinity did not necessarily exist in Keats's mind as problems of diction, but are merely symptomatic in a general way of a change which certainly took place. In contrast now to all of the verse written after *Endymion* and before *Lamia*, words almost as frequently polysyllabic as in Augustan verse are drawn upon.<sup>6</sup> In more marked contrast is the high percentage of Latinity in the diction of *Lamia*. Some attempt was made, in the discussion of *Isabella*, to illustrate that the length of words of Latin origin and their relative lack of stops and especially contiguous consonants allow them to be pronounced more rapidly and with less effort than words of native stock, and some examples were given of the common eighteenth-century belief that this was so. Dryden, for example, like most of the Augustans, uses a very Latin vocabulary, and—to take the first 300 words of *Absalom and Achitophel* as an instance in point—seems to maintain an average of about 22%. Keats, on the other hand, seldom rose above 10% in the odes; the total in the *Eve of St. Agnes* had been only 12.3%; even in the first *Hyperion*, written though it was under the shadow of Milton,

<sup>6</sup> Words of two or more syllables total 25.6% (782) and those of three or more amount to 6.4% (196), a rise respectively of about a fifth and a third from the odes. (Figured against the total number of words [3048] in Part I.) Cf. the first 300 words of Dryden's *Absalom and Achitophel*: 29% are of more than two syllables, and 8% of more than three.



Latinity averaged only 13.9%. In *Lamia*, however, words of Latin origin are even more frequent than in *Endymion* (15%) and almost rival Dryden by attaining a total of 18.8%,<sup>7</sup> although the Latinity is hardly obvious at first glance except in the rapid fluidity of the lines.

A further contribution to the increase in speed which characterizes *Lamia* is a diminution of diphthongs and historically "long" vowels. Keats, it will be remembered, had drawn heavily upon such vowels from *Hyperion* until the completion of the odes.<sup>8</sup> With a strange reversal of practice from his previous alterations, he may have attempted to avoid them, consciously or not, as when he altered "woeful time" (II, 144) to "revels rude."<sup>9</sup> Moreover, although assonance of a sort is occasionally found—

She breathed upon his eyes, and swift was seen (I, 124)

no such unusual interplay of vowels is found in *Lamia* as in the verse written after *Isabella* and before the end of May, 1819; nor can examples be found in this poem, except in the rarest instances, of the almost patterned alternation of "open" and "close" vowels which had often occurred in *Hyperion*, the *Eve of St. Agnes*, the odes, and the later sonnets.

It is of course well known, although the matter has not been pushed very far, that as his model for the technical structure of *Lamia* Keats turned largely to Dryden. Woodhouse, after talking with Keats about the poem, wrote to Taylor that "the metre is Drydenian heroic";<sup>10</sup> and Brown, who had been constantly with Keats during the writing of *Lamia*, stated that "He wrote it with great care, after much studying of Dryden's versification."<sup>11</sup> It has recently been asserted that, in the actual relation of some aspects of sentence-structure to the couplet, the influ-

<sup>7</sup> (574); Part I.

<sup>8</sup> See especially above, pp. 87-88.

<sup>9</sup> In the colorful opening of *Lamia*, they are rather high (for example, I, 1-46: 25% [121]). In a passage more characteristic of the poem as a whole (II, 1-45), they amount to 20.5% (104), a drop of almost a third from passages earlier analyzed from the *Eve of St. Agnes*, and more comparable to a passage analyzed from Dryden's *Fables* (*Cock and the Fox*, 1-54: 21.8% [118]).

<sup>10</sup> Sept. 20, 1819. Woodhouse's letter, which is in the Morgan Collection, is quoted in Amy Lowell, *John Keats* (1925), II, 317-320; see p. 320.

<sup>11</sup> Charles Armitage Brown, *Life of John Keats* (Oxford, 1937), p. 56.

ence of Dryden is negligible.<sup>12</sup> There is certainly some justification for this assertion. But it does not demolish the early statements of Brown and Woodhouse. For the influence of Dryden upon this poem is strongly apparent in *Lamia*, and, in at least a few respects, to an even greater degree than is commonly supposed. From Dryden, Keats learned to use effectively the Alexandrine and the triplet; and from Dryden, and perhaps from Sandys as well, he also learned how to reduce, with no great loss of fluidity, the run-on second line of the couplet which characterizes *Endymion* and the early epistles. He drew upon rhetorical patterns, peculiar to Dryden and the Augustans; and he made use of at least a few equally peculiar to the couplets of Sandys alone. Perhaps under the influence of Dryden he did away entirely with feminine rhymes; he adopted, probably unconsciously, a marked Latinity of diction, as great as Sandys's and almost as great as Dryden's; and polysyllabic words predominate in *Lamia* as well as in Dryden. But Dryden's influence is most apparent in the remarkably neo-classic metrical pattern of the individual line—in the use of initial inversion, and in the placing of pause. The prosody of *Lamia*, however, despite its frequent close following of that of Dryden and on occasion that of Sandys, is anything but slavish in imitation, and does great credit to Keats's own technical ability even at this uncertain time when he appeared, for a while, to lay comparatively little store by prosodic technique.

It will be remembered how, in *Isabella*, Keats attempted to secure greater emphasis and tightness of line and of stanza by drawing freely upon patterns of parallelism and repetition common in Fairfax and his Italian progenitors; how later, in *Hyperion*, he on occasion made use of rhetorical devices distinctive to Milton; and how, in those sonnets written after the close of 1817, he employed, with a similar end, different kinds of balance and of antithesis largely peculiar to Shakespeare's sonnets. No such closeness in following Dryden is consistently apparent throughout *Lamia*. But there are nevertheless entire passages which are certainly strongly Augustan in rhetorical pattern.

These patterns are almost solely ones of balance. Simple bal-

<sup>12</sup> See the article by Mr. C. A. Langworthy on "Dryden's Influence on the Versification of *Lamia*," *Research Studies of the State College of Washington*, II (1930), 117-124.

ance of substantives, which had been prevalent in all Augustan verse, is relatively common:

The taller grasses and full-flowering weed (I, 44).

Some demon's mistress, or the demon's self (I, 56).

And by thine eyes, and by thy starry crown (I, 90).

From weary tendrils, and bow'd branches green (I, 98).

Spoilt all her silver mail, and golden brede (I, 158).

Equally common is the typical eighteenth-century balance of substantive and modifying clause:

Fast by the springs / where she to bathe was wont,  
And in those meads / where sometime she might haunt,  
Were strewn rich gifts, / unknown to any Muse (I, 17-19).

Thou smooth-lipp'd serpent, / surely high inspired!  
Thou beauteous wreath, / with melancholy eyes (I, 83-84).

She writh'd about, / convuls'd with scarlet pain (I, 154).

This balance of substantive in one half of the line and of modifying clause or predicated phrase in the other may be accompanied as well by the pairing of substantives which was common in both Augustan prose and verse:

Drove *Nymph* and *Satyr* from the prosperous woods,

*Sceptre* and *mantle*, clasp'd with dewy gem,  
Frighted away the *Dryads* and the *Fauns* (I, 2, 4-5).

Balance of adjectival phrases—

Stiff in opinions, always in the wrong (*Abs. and Ach.*, I, 547)—

of which Dryden had perhaps made more abundant use than any other Augustan coupleteer, is occasionally found in *Lamia* as in

Strip'd like a zebra, freckled like a pard,  
Eyed like a peacock, and all crimson barr'd (I, 49-50).

Balance of verbal clauses, however, which Dryden had used rather more in the *Fables* than elsewhere—

*Relieve* th' oppressed, and *wipe* the Widow's tears

The Prince *was touch'd*, his tears *began to flow* (*Knight's Tale*,  
74, 93)—

is quite frequent in *Lamia*:

*Blush'd* a live damask, and swift-lipping *said* (I, 116).

*Give* me a woman's form, and *place* me where he is (I, 120).

She *felt* the warmth, her eyelids *open'd* bland (I, 141).

Jove *heard* his vows, and *better'd* his desire (I, 229).

All Augustan coupleteers, particularly Pope, had varied successive balance by drawing upon triptology, as in

To the first good, first perfect, and first fair

Form'd but to check, deliberate, and advise

We first endure, then pity, then embrace (*Essay on Man*, II,  
24, 70, 220).

With apparently a similar purpose, triptology is employed in *Lamia* through the listing of nouns by threes:

From rushes green, or brakes, or cowslipp'd lawns,

Of Satyrs, Fauns, or blear'd Silenus' sighs,

Of all her sapphires, greens, and amethysts (I, 6, 103, 162);

or through verbs:

Dissolv'd, or brighter shone, or interwreath'd,

Faded before him, cower'd, nor could restrain (I, 52, 137).

In rather common Augustan fashion, a triptological line is sometimes deliberately placed for variation within a series of

successive balanced lines, as in

Spoilt all her silver mail, and golden brede,  
*Made gloom of all her frecklings, streaks, and bars,*  
 Eclipsed her crescents, and licked up her stars (I, 158-160).

De Selincourt has noted the presence of antithesis in *Lamia*,<sup>13</sup> and his remarks are well justified. In contrast to the peculiarly Shakespearean antithesis of word employed in his latter sonnets, Keats now made occasional use of the marked antithetical line-halves common in the Augustans:

Not *one hour old*, yet of *sciential brain*  
 To unperplex *bliss* from its neighbour *pain* (I, 191-192).

Then from *amaze* into *delight* he fell (I, 324).

That, while it *smote*, still guaranteed to *save* (I, 338).

Not *mortal*, but of *heavenly progeny* (II, 86).

Mr. Ridley has supplemented his discussion of *Lamia* by a comparison of the number of triplets, Alexandrines, and run-on lines in both *Lamia* and the *Fables* of Dryden; and the figures which he offers are of great interest, although possibly a little misleading. Keats was never fond of Alexandrines; there are none at all in *Endymion*, and in the total poetic output of 1819 before *Lamia* (excepting of course the Spenserian stanzas of the *Eve of St. Agnes*) there are only a handful in the sonnets and a single one in the odes. But Mr. Ridley observes that a total of 5.7% of the lines of *Lamia* are Alexandrines—a higher proportion even than may be found in the *Fables* of Dryden (3.5%).<sup>14</sup> Despite Hunt's fondness for them,<sup>15</sup> Keats had employed no triplets at all in *Endymion* or in *Sleep and Poetry*; yet he uses several in *Lamia* (1.7% of the total number of lines) although still less than half as frequently as Dryden in the *Fables* (4.5%). The decrease in the use of run-on lines is considerable when

<sup>13</sup> See his third edition of Keats (1912), p. 453.

<sup>14</sup> *Keats' Craftsmanship*, Note J, p. 305.

<sup>15</sup> For Hunt's discussion of the triplet, see the rather glowing analysis in the Preface to his *Poetical Works* (1832), pp. xviii-xxiii. Hunt's enthusiasm even leads him to "confess I like the very bracket that marks out the triplet to the reader's eye, and prepares him for the music of it. It has a look like a bridge of a lute."

compared with *Endymion*; but their frequency is still far above Dryden's:

*Endymion*: 47%      *Lamia*: 33.2%      *Fables*: 10.8%

These figures are illuminating, and substantiate what is at once apparent in careful reading of *Lamia*: that Keats, who had hitherto sought to avoid monotony by loosening the barriers of the couplet, now reverted to the traditional Augustan devices of triplets and especially Alexandrines, thus securing at once variety and greater metrical integrity. But what Mr. Ridley has to say of the run-on lines in *Lamia* can, in one way, mislead one. It is true that the frequency of run-on lines of *Lamia*, though much below that of *Endymion*, is still three times greater than that of the *Fables*; but the couplet in *Lamia* is nonetheless almost as well-integrated as that of Sandys and even of Dryden.

Emphasis was laid, near the outset of this study, upon the extent to which, in some of his early couplets and especially in *Endymion*, Keats departed from all eighteenth-century tradition and indeed English metrical tradition generally, and, with a few instances in the couplets of Hunt and of Browne as precedent, often deliberately placed the pause after the first line, while the second line of the couplet was run-on. The opening lines of *Endymion*, to take the first passage at hand, are an instance in point:

A thing of beauty is a joy forever: /  
 Its loveliness increases; it will never  
 Pass into nothingness; but still will keep  
 A bower quiet for us, and a sleep  
 Full of sweet dreams, and health, and quiet breathing. /  
 Therefore on every morrow are we wreathing  
 A flowery band to bind us to the earth, /  
 Spite of despondence, of the inhuman dearth  
 Of noble natures, of the gloomy days, /  
 Of all the unhealthy and o'er-darkened ways  
 Made for our searching: yes, in spite of all, /  
 Some shape of beauty moves away the pall  
 From our dark spirits. Such the sun, the moon, /  
 Trees old and young, sprouting a shady boon  
 For simple sheep . . .

In *Lamia*, on the other hand, the pause, except when variation is deliberately sought, is almost invariably after the concluding line of the couplet. A few lines from a typical passage will illustrate this:

Ah, happy Lycius!—for she was a maid  
 More beautiful then ever twisted braid, /  
 Or sigh'd, or blush'd, or on spring-flowered lea  
 Spread a green kirtle to the minstrelsy: /  
 A virgin purest lipp'd, yet in the lore  
 Of love deep learnèd to the red heart's core: /  
 Not one hour old, yet of scintial brain  
 To unperplex bliss from its neighbour pain; /  
 Define their pettish limits, and estrange  
 Their points of contact, and swift counterchange; /  
 Intrigue with the specious chaos, and dispart  
 Its most ambiguous atoms with sure art. (I, 185-196). /

Thus, although the actual number of run-on lines in *Lamia* is not much less than that of *Endymion*, the integrity of the couplet is much greater because of the pause at the end of the second line of the couplet. If the total number of run-on lines in *Lamia*, again, is three times that of the *Fables*, it is simply because Dryden, although to a less degree than some of the coupletters who followed him, frequently made the couplet antithetical, with a slight pause at the end of the first line as well as a more definite pause at the end of the second. Pronounced end-stoppage in the couplet, however, is almost as common in *Lamia* as in the *Fables*.

For it would appear that, in contrast to most eighteenth-century coupletters, Keats, though retaining the integrity of the couplet as a unit, employed, like Sandys before him, a violently run-on first line. Professor Douglas Bush has made plain how carefully Keats had been reading Sandys's translation of *Ovid* at the time of the composition of *Lamia*, and the extent to which Sandys may well have colored the diction of some of the most distinctive passages in *Lamia*.<sup>16</sup> His contention may perhaps be further illustrated and supported by recourse to the versification of the *Ovid*. More, probably, than any writer in the closed couplet of either the seventeenth or eighteenth centuries,

<sup>16</sup> "Notes on Keats's Reading," *PMLA*, L (1935), 789-790.

Sandys, while retaining the structural body of the couplet, was prone to employ a strongly run-on first line. To an extent, moreover, that might almost be designated as a mannerism, Sandys frequently made use of a full stop within the body of the first line, before running the line on into the second half of the couplet, as in

Then thus: My Fates prevent one; (x) lo, they tie  
My falt'ring tongue, and farther speech deny.

I long to feed on grasse: (x) I long to run  
About the spacious fields. Woe's me, undone!<sup>17</sup>

Or to take a passage of three consecutive such couplets:

To her, the Raven: (x) Mischiefe thee surprise  
For staying me. Vain omen's I despise;  
Then forward flew; (x) and told the hurtfull truth  
Of lost Coronis, and th' Aemonian youth.  
The harp drops from his hand: (x) and from his head  
The Laurell fell: his chearfull colour fled.<sup>18</sup>

And such a combination of medial full-stopping in the first line, followed by strong enjambment, is common in *Lamia*, as in

And for her eyes: (x) what could such eyes do there  
But weep, and weep, that they were born so fair (I, 61-62).

She tastes unseen; (x) unseen her nimble feet  
Leave traces in the grass and flowers sweet (I, 96-97).

Still shone her crown; (x) that vanish'd, also she  
Melted and disappear'd as suddenly (I, 165-166).

Oh, happy Lycius! (x) —for she was a maid  
More beautiful than ever twisted braid (I, 185-186).

For all this came a ruin: (x) side by side  
They were enthronèd, in the even tide (II, 16-17).

The rather frequent run-on lines of *Lamia*, when considered as a whole, are consequently no indication of looseness of couplet

<sup>17</sup> (Ed. of 1640), p. 31.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 30.



structure. And when the couplets are analyzed as separate entities, almost half may be designated as logically complete units, as in

A virgin purest lipp'd, yet in the lore  
Of love deep learnèd to the red heart's core (I, 189-190)

or as in

Left to herself, the serpent now began  
To change; her elfin blood in madness ran,  
Her mouth foam'd, and the grass, therewith besprent,  
Wither'd at dew so sweet and virulent (I, 146-149).

Almost a third may be grammatically subordinate, but yet not completely run-on, as in

And, as the lava ravishes the mead,  
Spoilt all her silver mail, and golden brede;  
Made gloom of all her frecklings, streaks, and bars,  
Eclips'd her crescents, and lick'd up her stars:  
So that, in moments few, she was undrest  
Of all her sapphires, greens, and amethyst,  
And rubious-argent: of all these bereft,  
Nothing but pain and ugliness were left (I, 157-164).

Such a proportion, considered in both instances, contrasts strikingly with *Endymion* and the couplets of Hunt and of Browne, excels that of Sandys, and is comparable to Dryden and even Pope.<sup>19</sup>

In thus taking over from Dryden and partly from Sandys the end-stopped couplet, Keats's purpose was doubtless to attain a more sinewy and well-integrated couplet than he had hitherto written; and in order to secure variation in the use of such a

<sup>19</sup>	Independent Couplets	Couplets grammatically subordinate but not run-on
<i>Endymion</i> , I, 1-406:	10% (19)	24% (55)
<i>Lamia</i> , I:	46.2% (87)	30.3% (57)
Sandys's translation of <i>Ovid</i> , I, 1-206:	38% (38)	41% (41)
Dryden,		
<i>Absalom &amp; Achitophel</i> , 1-229:	50.4% (56)	24.3% (27)
<i>Fables: The Cock and the Fox</i> :	59% (234)	27.4% (99)
Pope, <i>Rape of the Lock</i> , II:	60% (43)	29.6% (21)

Cf. as well the proportions in the *Epistle to Mathew*, in Hunt, and in William Browne, above, p. 22. See there also for particulars in regard to the enumeration of couplet types. In all counts, short dangling lines and triplets have been omitted.

couplet he had no recourse but to adopt also, under the influence of Dryden, the Alexandrine and the triplet. A further disciplinary measure was the complete abstention, except in a single instance, from the feminine ending with which his early verse had been filled, and which with chronological regularity had dwindled to almost virtual extinction after *Hyperion*. Moreover, hiatus or vowel-gaping, which had been the bane of eighteenth-century poets and critics, and which had been successively decreased from 19.3% of the lines in the *Epistle to Mathew*, is now found on only rare occasions, as in

The ever-smitten Hermes empty left (I, 7).

It appears in only 4%<sup>20</sup> of the lines—a proportion far lower than in Sandys (15%),<sup>21</sup> much even below that of Dryden (12%),<sup>22</sup> who had consciously striven to avoid it,<sup>23</sup> and hardly more than that of Pope (2.8%).<sup>24</sup>

Still another prosodic restriction which characterizes *Lamia*, and which has as its end the integrity of the line as well as the couplet, was the careful avoidance of a line concluded either with an adjective governing a subsequent noun or substantival clause or with a preposition. Such a restriction was one of the primary rules of Restoration and eighteenth-century prosody. It early received formal affirmation by Bysshe;<sup>25</sup> and it is almost as invariably observed by Dryden as by Pope. Hunt, following Bowles and especially the heavy-eared Mickle, had broken the tradition; and Keats's couplets, until after *Endymion*, bore in this respect, as in others, the Huntian stamp. Yet in *Lamia*, only five of its 708 lines conclude with a preposition, and in only one of these five instances—

For the first time, since first he harbour'd in  
That purple-lined palace . . . (II, 30-31)—

<sup>20</sup> (16); figured from Part I.

<sup>21</sup> (15); from the *Ovid*, I, 1-100.

<sup>22</sup> (10); from *Absalom and Achitophel*, 1-83.

<sup>23</sup> See Dryden's discussion of hiatus in the *Dedication of the Aeneis*, *Essays of John Dryden* (ed. Ker, 1926), II, 216-217; cf. Pope's letter to Walsh (*Works*, VI, 58-59) and Johnson, *Rambler*, No. 88.

<sup>24</sup> (4); *Rape of the Lock*, II.

<sup>25</sup> *Art of English Poetry* (1710), p. 12.

does the preposition govern a following clause. Similarly, out of the entire poem, only three lines conclude with an adjective upon which the following line is dependent: in one instance, the adjective is followed by a dependent infinitive:

What canst thou say or do of charm enough  
To dull the nice remembrance of any home (I, 274-275);

and only once by a dependent noun:<sup>26</sup>

Fine was the mitigated fury, like  
Apollo's presence (II, 78-79).

Although Keats's use of a terminal adjective or preposition rapidly decreased in all his shorter poems of 1819, and is indeed practically non-existent in the odes, yet occasional use of such adjectives and prepositions is still found in the narrative verse even as late as the *Eve of St. Agnes*, and it is rather unlikely that, without the influence of Dryden, the number in *Lamia* would have been as low as it is.

In *Hyperion*, the *Eve of St. Agnes*, and the odes, Keats had achieved a severity of structure and an integrity of line almost unknown in any previous blank verse, Spenserian stanzas, and odes; but such variations as he drew upon, within the restraining limits of the particular form he employed, were variations almost peculiarly his own: a condensation of impassioned energy which might animate his static imagery; a rich and careful mosaic of consonant and of vowel-arrangement; and, perhaps beyond almost any other writer in the language, an abundance of spondaic feet.

Just as Keats, in *Lamia*, drew upon disciplinary measures practiced by the poets and advocated by the prosodists from the time of Dryden until well after Johnson, his employment of metrical variation was likewise that which had distinctively characterized the English Augustan writers. Repeated examples have been given of how Keats had gradually reduced medial inversions of accent—

˘ ˘ ˘ ˘ ˘ ˘ ˘ ˘ ˘ ˘ ˘ ˘ ˘ ˘ ˘ ˘  
Of all / she list, / *strange* or / magnif / icent (I, 204)—

<sup>26</sup> There is only one instance in the poem (II, 301) of a line concluded with an adverb upon which the following line is directly dependent—a rather striking contrast to *Endymion* and the couplets of the 1817 volume.

to virtual extinction. Here medially inverted feet total only .2% (5)<sup>27</sup> of the feet—an amount not greatly above that of Dryden (.07%), and in marked contrast, for example, to *Endymion* (1.7%) where, under the precedent of Hunt and Chapman, medial inversion of accent would seem to have been regarded as a desirable variation. And Keats seems now to have made conscious attempts to avoid it, as in the omission of the line

Aye, where / is it, / my dear? / Up in / the air? (after 1.162),

or in the alteration of

Spells are / but made / to break. / Whisper'd / the youth (II, 84)

to

Whisp'ring / in mid / night sil / ence, said / the youth.

Mention has likewise been made, from time to time, of Keats's gradually increasing use of initially inverted feet. Initial inversion of accent had long been an English metrical tradition. It was relatively common in the Elizabethans, and, in the discussion of *Hyperion*, its frequency in Milton was dwelt upon. After Waller, it became a favorite variation in the couplet, and is very likely one of the most prominent single peculiarities in Augustan meter. Prosodists from Bysshe down quickly gave it their sanction. Mason,<sup>28</sup> Newbery,<sup>29</sup> and Kames<sup>30</sup> commended its use. Later in the century, even the strict Monboddio extolled it as a most "beautiful variety," wondering that it was not even more used.<sup>31</sup> Mitford, the soberest yet most gifted of the lot, regarded it as perhaps the foremost means of securing metrical variation, adding that it might actually "hold the first place in the first verse of a poem,"<sup>32</sup> and even Johnson, who, though willing enough to admit other forms of metrical variety, was suspicious of transference of accent in general, admitted that

<sup>27</sup> Figured from the total number of feet (2006) in Part I.

<sup>28</sup> *Essay on the Power of Numbers* (1748), p. 43.

<sup>29</sup> *Art of Poetry* (1762), I, 11.

<sup>30</sup> *Elements of Criticism* (1762), II, 384-385.

<sup>31</sup> *Origin and Progress of Language* (Edinburgh, 1774), II, 388 n.

<sup>32</sup> *Inquiry into the Principles of Harmony in Language* (2nd ed.; 1804), p. 99.

initial inversion resulted in no "unpleasing diminution of harmony."<sup>33</sup>

Now the percentage of initially inverted feet in Sandys—1.4%<sup>34</sup>—is not untypical of much Elizabethan and seventeenth-century pentameter verse, while that of Dryden—3.7%<sup>35</sup>—is slightly lower, I think, than the average for Augustan verse; and the difference is at once apparent. Initial inversion in *Lamia*, however, amounts to 6%<sup>36</sup> of the feet—a total unequalled by even Pope (5.4%),<sup>37</sup> who, more perhaps than any other previous writer of pentameter, had drawn upon the initially inverted foot. Entire couplets are initially inverted, as in

'        '
   
Blush'd in / to roses 'mid his golden hair,

'       '
   
Fallen / in curls about his shoulders bare (I, 25-26)

'       '
   
Strip'd like / a zebra, freckled like a pard,

'       '
   
Eyed like / a peacock, and all crimson-barr'd (I, 49-50).

'       '
   
Ravish'd, / she lifted her Circean head,

'       '
   
Blush'd a / live damask, and swift-lisping said (I, 115-116).

This marked rise in initially inverted feet can perhaps be better illustrated by giving the proportion of lines beginning with it from a few of the couplets analyzed thus far:

Couplets of the 1817 volume

<i>Epistle to Mathew:</i>	12.9%
<i>Epistle to George Keats:</i>	13.6%
"I stood tiptoe":	16.1%

<sup>33</sup> *Rambler*, No. 86.

<sup>34</sup> (31); from the *Ovid*, I, 1-415.

<sup>35</sup> (48); from the *Cock and the Fox*, 1-256. The frequency in *MacFlecknoe* is almost the same: 3.6% (40).

<sup>36</sup> (124); from Book I.

<sup>37</sup> (113); from the *Epistle to Arbuthnot*, cf. *Rape of the Lock*, II: 5% (84).

<i>Endymion</i> , I:	15.4%
<i>Lamia</i> :	28.5%
[Dryden	
<i>MacFlecknoe</i> :	19 %
<i>Cock and the Fox</i> , I-256:	19.5%
Pope	
<i>Essay on Criticism</i> , I-336:	25 %
<i>Epistle to Arbuthnot</i> :	26.9%]

Just as Keats drew heavily upon initial inversion of accent to gain speed and impetus of line—for “loading every rift with ore” was now far from his purpose—he made use, as never before, of elidable trisyllabic feet. Following Hunt and Chapman, he used trisyllabic feet with some frequency in his early verse; but after *Endymion* he had constantly been on his guard against this time-honored device for securing rapidity of tempo, and had often revised to eradicate it. In *Lamia*, however, he again drew abundantly upon trisyllabic feet; they total 3.4%—an amount well above even *Endymion* (2.1%). In contrast to his earlier verse, moreover, and in keeping with general Augustan practice, these feet are usually elidable by synaeresis (59%)<sup>38</sup>—

Thou beaut / eous wreath, / with mel / anchol / y eyes (I, 84)—  
rather than by syncope (31.8%)—

Fair Herm / es, crown'd / with feath / ers, flutt / (e)ring light (I, 68).

An accompaniment, in eighteenth-century couplets, of the employment of the elidable trisyllabic foot as a means of acquiring speed was the occasional permission of the use—common in Augustan prosodic practice—of a word, the last syllable of which would occupy the first syllable of the concluding iamb; and which, through the slight hesitancy in pronunciation ensuing from a specific combination of consonants, gave the last foot

<sup>38</sup> (69); figured against the total number of trisyllabic feet in Part I. I of course do not imply that syncope is rare in eighteenth-century verse. It is, in fact, rather common; but it is usually marked, and in such instances must consequently be said to comprize actual elision rather than to characterize possibly elidable trisyllabic feet. But even if cases of specifically marked elision were included as trisyllabic feet, it is probable that trisyllabic feet are somewhat more frequently elidable by synaeresis than syncope in Augustan verse as a whole.

the sound almost of an anapest. Shenstone, whose prosodic remarks are on occasion very acute, noted this:

There is a vast beauty (to me) in using a word of a particular nature in the eighth or ninth syllables of our English verse. I mean what is virtually a dactyl. For instance

And pikes, the tyrants of the watry plains.

Let any person of an ear substitute "liquid" instead of "watry," and he will find the disadvantage.<sup>39</sup>

Because, as Johnson later stated, "the Hebrew Grammarians have observed that it is impossible to pronounce two consonants without the intervention of a vowel, or without some emission of the breath between one or another,"<sup>40</sup> and because the liquid "l" becomes semi-syllabic under certain conditions, Shenstone would likewise include such words as "trembling."<sup>41</sup> The pause, as Johnson said in speaking of the contiguity of consonants, is of course "longer and more perceptible, as the sounds of the consonants are less harmonically conjoined, and, by consequence, the flow of the verse is longer interrupted."

This peculiar preference for either an elidable trisyllabic fifth foot or, in the same position, for an iamb which, because of a peculiar juxtaposition of two consonants, would seem to have almost an additional light syllable, is more or less general in Augustan verse. It is found in Pope—as in

Or brew fierce tempests on the wintry main (*Rape of the Lock*, II, 85)—

and, in the *Cock and the Fox*, in Dryden's *Fables*, it occurs in 5.8% of the lines.<sup>42</sup> Its frequency in *Lamia* is consequently interesting. It may be an elidable trisyllabic foot:

Drove nymph and Satyr from the prosperous woods (I, 2).

His golden throne, bent warm on amorous theft (I, 8).

The taller grasses and full-flowering weed (I, 44).

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<sup>39</sup> "On Writing and Books," *Works* (1764), II, 180.

<sup>40</sup> *Rambler*, No. 88.

<sup>41</sup> *Works*, I, 270.

<sup>42</sup> (31); ll. 1-530.

It may consist simply of the semi-vowel, palatal "y":

So Hermes thought, and a celestial heat (I, 22).

And thus, while Hermes on his *pinion's* lay (I, 76).

Or it may, on occasion, consist only of two other contiguous consonants, the pronunciation of the first of which necessitates some pause, however slight, before proceeding to the pronunciation of the second:

Of Satyrs, Fauns, and blear'd Silenus' sighs (I, 103).

That the frequency of such lines, containing this peculiar Augustan device, had not been a consistent practice with Keats is at once apparent in the comparison, in this respect, of *Lamia* with the early couplets.<sup>43</sup>

But in his attempt to secure speed of line Keats drew chiefly upon another time-honored device, that of stress-failure, or pyrrhic feet:

˘ ˘ ˘ ˘ ˘ ˘ ˘ ˘ ˘ ˘  
Frighted / away / the Dry / *ads and* / the Fauns (I, 5)

˘ ˘ ˘ ˘ ˘ ˘ ˘ ˘ ˘ ˘  
From high / Olym / *pus had* / he stol / en light (I, 9)

˘ ˘ ˘ ˘ ˘ ˘ ˘ ˘ ˘ ˘  
Of *his* / great sum / *moner*, / and made / retreat

˘ ˘ ˘ ˘ ˘ ˘ ˘ ˘ ˘ ˘  
Into / a for / *est on* / the shores / of Crete (I, 11-12).

Pyrrhic feet, which had been frequent in Keats's early verse, totalling in *Endymion*, for example, 13%, had been increasingly diminished, and supplanted with spondees; but in *Lamia* they

<sup>43</sup> Couplets of the 1817 volume  
(*Epistles* to Mathew, George  
Keats, and Clarke; "I stood tiptoe";  
*Calidore, Specimen of an Induction*,  
*Sleep and Poetry*): 2.8% (36)  
*Endymion*, I: 3.2% (32)  
[*Hunt's Story of Rimini*,  
Cantos I, II, & III: 3.5% (42)]  
*Lamia*, I: 6.3% (39)



rise to the extraordinary total of 15.8%.<sup>44</sup> As Keats thus reversed his entire metrical tendency hitherto, there was a marked diminution in the use of the spondee, which more than any other one metrical peculiarity had distinguished all of his verse written between the summer of 1818 and the conclusion of the odes. Spondaic feet (3.8%)<sup>45</sup> now total little more than a third of their former average; and in contrast to Keats's continual revision to multiply them, in *Hyperion*, the *Eve of St. Agnes*, and the odes, revision with an opposite purpose is now made, as when the passive participle as epithet and a spondaic foot are simultaneously eradicated in the alteration from

"The high / lamp'd ban / quet room" (II, 121)

to

"The glow / ing banq / uet-room."

If the influence of Dryden is apparent in the prosodic means resorted to by Keats to preserve the structural integrity of the individual line and of the couplet and at the same time allow him free use of traditional Augustan means of securing variety, it is not less obvious in Keats's utilization of accent and the cæsure to attain, as a rule, greater rapidity. Dryden, who made such frequent and varied use of initial inversion of accent, was aware that the cæsural pause could be almost eliminated if a strongly accented initial syllable of the line is followed by a definite pause: the rest of the line follows such a pause without a break, with at least an apparent result of greater rapidity of flow. A few instances from *Absalom and Achitophel* will illustrate:

Some, (x) by their monarch's fatal mercy grown (146).

But, (x) for he knew his title not allowed (224).

Starve, (x) and defraud the people of thy reign (245).

<sup>44</sup> (314); Part I. Cf. Dryden, *Cock and the Fox*, 1-256: 11.8% (151). Dryden's frequency is, I believe, about average for Augustan couplets.

<sup>45</sup> (77); Part I. Cf. Dryden, *Cock and the Fox*, 1-256: 2.8% (36). Dryden's average is high for Augustan verse. Cf. Pope, *Rape of the Lock*, II, 1-72: .8% (3) and *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*, 1-108: .7% (4).

*Lamia* reveals even more frequent use of initial stress followed by a pause, and the stress as a rule is even stronger than in Dryden. The greater stress in *Lamia* is chiefly owing to the frequency with which, as in *Hyperion*, Keats employed the prosodic device—not uncommon in Milton and in many of the Augustans—of giving impetus to the line by beginning it with a verb. Dryden himself made use of this device: 9% of the lines in *MacFlecknoe*, for example, begin with a verb, and the percentage is above average. The practice is carried to a much farther degree in *Lamia*, which attains a total of 16½%. But although Keats makes even greater use in *Lamia* than does Dryden of the strongly accented initial syllable followed by a pause, he occasionally varies such lines by adding a more noticeable medial pause:

Pearls, (x) while on land they wither'd and ador'd (I, 16).

Bright, (x) and cirque-couchant in a dusky brake (I, 46).

Bloom'd, (x) and gave up her honey to the bees (I, 142).

Fair, (x) on a sloping green of mossy tread (I, 181).

Or, to give a few instances with more marked medial pause:

Came, (x) as through bubbling honey, for love's sake (I, 55).

Made, (x) by a spell, the triple league decrease (I, 345).

Flared, (x) here and there, from wealthy festivals (I, 358).

Now for the same reason that a marked pause after a strong initial stress results in the remainder of the line continuing rapidly and usually without much of a break, a more apparent rapidity is effected when the cæsure itself is in the first half than in the second half of the line, while at the same time the body of the line remains firmer. As a consequence, eighteenth-century coupleteers, whose aim was so often joint rapidity and

integrity, strove consciously to place the cæsura mainly in the first half line.<sup>46</sup>

The effect of rapidity was particularly apparent when the cæsura was placed immediately after the accented fourth syllable; for, as Webb had long since remarked, "when the pause falls on the fourth syllable, we shall find that we pronounce the six last in the same time that we do the four first."<sup>47</sup> Now Pope, in his letter on versification to Cromwell, had admitted the danger of having more than three lines in succession in which the cæsura came after the fourth syllable;<sup>48</sup> but—as Warton commented on the statement—this was "a rule he himself did not always observe; for he continued the pause at the fourth syllable, sometimes, through six verses together."<sup>49</sup> So frequently did Pope place the cæsura immediately after the fourth syllable that he elicited condemnation from even the most tolerant of mid-century prosodists, Daniel Webb.<sup>50</sup> Pope, however, had had good precedent for the practice. Dryden, though not in so extreme a fashion, had likewise shown partiality for the cæsura after the second foot, as did all Augustans; and it may well have been from Dryden that its value, long since realized by Keats, was at once appreciated and used by him to good advantage. For although, beginning with *Isabella*, Keats had broken from the practice of his early couplets in which, closely following Hunt, favor was so often given to the weak or feminine cæsura after the 5th and even 7th syllable, now, of the pentameter lines of the first book of *Lamia*, 23.4% have the cæsura in the precise center, 23.9% have it somewhere in the second half of the line, while a total of 33.8% of the lines have it immediately after the fourth syllable.<sup>51</sup> As many as five lines in succession, for example, will have the cæsural pause after the second foot:

<sup>46</sup> See Appendix G, pp. 203-209.

<sup>47</sup> *Remarks on the Beauties of Poetry* (1762; ed. Hecht, Hamburg, 1920), p. 58.

<sup>48</sup> Rewritten as a letter to Walsh, October 22, 1706. *Works*, VI, 57.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, VI, 57, n. 1.

<sup>50</sup> *Remarks on the Beauties of Poetry*, pp. 57-58.

<sup>51</sup> After 2nd syll.: .5% (2); 3rd: 3.7% (14); 4th: 33.8% (127); 5th: 23.4% (39); 6th: 17.8% (67); 7th: 5.6% (21); 8th: .5% (2); double or triple pause: 14.3% (54). Cf. Dryden, *Cock and the Fox*, 1-220: 2nd: 2.5% (6); 3rd: 3.6% (8); 4th: 39% (86); 5th: 19% (42); 6th: 18.6% (41); 7th: 5.4% (12); 8th: .9% (2); double or triple: 10.9% (24).

At whose white feet (x) the languid Tritons poured  
 Pearls, while on land (x) they wither'd and ador'd.  
 Fast by the springs (x) where she to bathe was wont,  
 And in those meads (x) where sometime she might haunt,  
 Were strewn rich gifts, (x) unknown to any Muse (I, 15-19).

Dryden employed this post-fourth-syllable pausing, together with initial stress inversion, with telling effect in emphasis and rapidity. To give a few instances from *Absalom and Achitophel* again:

Plots, true or false, (x) are necessary things (83).

Bankrupt of life, (x) yet prodigal of ease (168).

Tread the same track, (x) when she the prime renews (217).

Love but themselves, (x) in their posterity (426).

Large was his wealth, (x) but larger was his heart (826).

Swift was the race, (x) but short the time to run (837).

Arms thy delight, (x) and war was all thy own (841).

Such a combination almost produces, in the first half line, the quadrasyllabic choriambic foot (˘ ˘ ˘ ˘), and — as in

Why did I write? (x) What sin to me unknown

Dipp'd me in ink, (x) my parents' or my own  
 (*Ep. to Arb.*, 125-126)—

it is common in Pope, who in the second canto of the *Rape of the Lock* employs it in the extreme total of 23.9% of the lines.

It may very well have been from Dryden that Keats caught such a combination of initial inversion and post-fourth-syllable pausing; for in very marked contrast to his early couplets,

instances abound in *Lamia*. In the revision, for example, of the line,

$\begin{array}{cccccccc} \text{ } & \text{ } & \text{ } & \text{ } & \text{ } & \text{ } & \text{ } & \text{ } \\ \text{ } & \text{ } & \text{ } & \text{ } & \text{ } & \text{ } & \text{ } & \text{ } \\ \text{ } & \text{ } & \text{ } & \text{ } & \text{ } & \text{ } & \text{ } & \text{ } \end{array}$ 
 In the / high midst, / in hon / our of / the bride (II, 127),

he simultaneously eradicated the spondee and, by the mere change in position of a word, achieved a choriambic first half line in

$\begin{array}{cccc} \text{ } & \text{ } & \text{ } & \text{ } \\ \text{ } & \text{ } & \text{ } & \text{ } \\ \text{ } & \text{ } & \text{ } & \text{ } \end{array}$ 
*High in the midst*, (x) in honor of the bride,

Indeed out of the first book of *Lamia*, a rather marked total of 9.7% are metrically in this pattern. A few examples will illustrate:

$\begin{array}{cccc} \text{ } & \text{ } & \text{ } & \text{ } \\ \text{ } & \text{ } & \text{ } & \text{ } \\ \text{ } & \text{ } & \text{ } & \text{ } \end{array}$ 
 Frighted away (x) the Dryads and the Fauns (I, 5).

$\begin{array}{cccc} \text{ } & \text{ } & \text{ } & \text{ } \\ \text{ } & \text{ } & \text{ } & \text{ } \\ \text{ } & \text{ } & \text{ } & \text{ } \end{array}$ 
 Pearls, while on land (x) they wither'd and ador'd.

$\begin{array}{cccc} \text{ } & \text{ } & \text{ } & \text{ } \\ \text{ } & \text{ } & \text{ } & \text{ } \\ \text{ } & \text{ } & \text{ } & \text{ } \end{array}$ 
 Fast, by the springs (x) where she to bathe was wont (I, 16-17).

$\begin{array}{cccc} \text{ } & \text{ } & \text{ } & \text{ } \\ \text{ } & \text{ } & \text{ } & \text{ } \\ \text{ } & \text{ } & \text{ } & \text{ } \end{array}$ 
 Sprinkled with stars (x) like Ariadne's tiar (I, 58).

$\begin{array}{cccc} \text{ } & \text{ } & \text{ } & \text{ } \\ \text{ } & \text{ } & \text{ } & \text{ } \\ \text{ } & \text{ } & \text{ } & \text{ } \end{array}$ 
 Free as the air, (x) invisibly she strays (I, 94).

$\begin{array}{cccc} \text{ } & \text{ } & \text{ } & \text{ } \\ \text{ } & \text{ } & \text{ } & \text{ } \\ \text{ } & \text{ } & \text{ } & \text{ } \end{array}$ 
 It was no dream (x)—or say a dream it was (I, 126).

$\begin{array}{cccc} \text{ } & \text{ } & \text{ } & \text{ } \\ \text{ } & \text{ } & \text{ } & \text{ } \\ \text{ } & \text{ } & \text{ } & \text{ } \end{array}$ 
 Left to herself, (x) the serpent now beagn (I, 146).

It may be questioned whether, in the use of initial inversion, of pyrrhic feet, and of placing of pause, not to mention in other respects, any other verse of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is as closely akin to the Augustan couplet as is *Lamia*.<sup>52</sup> The kinship is the more remarkable inasmuch as it manifests a complete reversal from the metrical direction in which Keats had continually proceeded after *Isabella*.

<sup>52</sup> Even the closed couplets of Crabbe and Byron, in respect to metrical inversion, trisyllabic feet, and cæsural placing, are hardly exceptions.

Eschewing the run-on and feminine-paused couplet of his early verse which, after Mickle and Bowles, Hunt had popularized, Keats turned to Dryden and partly to Sandys as his models; in so far as his purpose was concerned, he would seem to have profited from the instruction. Keats sought rapidity of flow: long vowels were decreased; a more Latin and polysyllabic diction was drawn upon; an early *cæsura* was used; peculiarly elidable trisyllabic feet and stress-failure were employed in abundance; the spondaic foot was greatly diminished; and the epithets and images were such as to allow the reader to pass on after quick recognition rather than demand that he linger and fully absorb. He wished greater emphasis and greater integrity of both line and couplet: he consequently adopted patterns of stress and pause absent in his early couplets, but common in the Augustan couplet-teers; he abolished the feminine rhyme, avoided such vices of the Huntian couplet as concluding the line with an adjective or a preposition, and turned from the run-on to a more closed form of the couplet; and, to secure variety, confined himself largely to such traditional neo-classical devices as the triplet, the Alexandrine, and the initially inverted foot. Determined as he was to couch what may possibly be an almost dogmatically moral allegory in such a form that its "fire" "must take hold of people in some way" and "give them either pleasant or unpleasant sensation," Keats reverted once again, in this strange poem, to the couplet. The couplet was hardly a poetic form which would descend with slow and majestic richness upon the reader, and "shine over him and set soberly although in magnificence leaving him in the *Luxury of twilight*"—for such was far from Keats's present purpose; it was a form, on the contrary, which would express what he had to say with rapidity, with emphasis, and even epigrammatic succinctness.

## 2

## FALL OF HYPERION

The "intensity" upon which Keats had continually placed the greatest emphasis was largely the force which determined the direction and nature of his poetical development. Throughout this study, it has been stressed that until after the composition of the odes this "intensity," however refined and restrained,

was fundamentally associated by Keats with the sumptuous and the luxurious; and that during the spring of 1819 he almost definitely abandoned for a multitude of reasons this entire way of thinking and feeling which, despite frequent previous questionings, had hitherto been so inextricably interwoven with the general character of his poetry—although this change, as far as Keats's verse itself is concerned, does not seem to have crystallized until after the last of the odes of May had been completed.

This transition of mind was indeed one of abandonment and little else; for it was a transition that led to nothing definite or certain. It was fundamentally a state of renunciation rather than a new and positive embarkation. *Lamia* itself illustrates the uncertainty which followed this renunciation; without offering a specific course of action as alternative, it had at most merely taken the standpoint that the poet should renounce the luxurious and the exquisite as being phantasmal, and that he must not remain indifferent to the cares and miseries of his fellow men. "There they live and love," wrote Woodhouse of *Lamia* and Lycius, after discussing the poem with Keats—"There they live and love, 'the world forgetting: of the world forgot.'"<sup>1</sup> But beyond this *Lamia* hardly went, if indeed that far. In its technical temper and direction as well, *Lamia* reveals this same uncertainty; for however skillfully Keats put into execution what he had learned from eighteenth-century versification, and from Dryden and Sandys, and however much he even improved upon it to fit his immediate purpose, the stylistic character of this poem was none the less largely foreign not only to the nature of his own gift in poetry but also to his entire bent of mind, and would appear to have been dictated in the main only by uncertainty and by his almost desperate resolution to break radically from the direction he had always hitherto taken.

This same uncertainty underlies the conception and structure of the revised *Hyperion* of August and September, 1819, although indications of a more positive and even sanguine attitude are certainly present. With an acceptance, particularly apparent in the long journal-letter of the preceding spring, that pain and evil are inherent in nature, Keats attained an even more tolerant and sympathetic view of man himself than he had previously

<sup>1</sup> Woodhouse's *Ms.* letter to Taylor, Sept. 20, 1819; quoted in Amy Lowell, II, 319.

possessed. The doctrine of perfectibility was childish and wishful thinking—"the nature of the world will not admit of it—the inhabitants of the world will correspond to itself."<sup>2</sup> But although fully conscious that a "fallible being," to use Johnson's phrase, "will fail somewhere," he perceived something fine in human nature, however imperfectible it might be: "There is an electric fire in human nature tending to purify—so that among these human creatures there is continually some birth of a new heroism. The pity is that we must wonder at it: as we should at finding a pearl in rubbish."<sup>3</sup> Indeed, by the time that he revised *Hyperion* Keats seems to have determined definitely that it is by no means enough for the poet merely to burden his mind with awareness of the pain and sorrow knit up in the very nature of existence; but that he must accept the concrete world, with the individuals in it, and delight in it. "Wonders are no wonders to me," he wrote after completing the revision. "I am more at home amongst Men and Women. I would rather read Chaucer than Ariosto."<sup>4</sup> And the *Fall of Hyperion*, however filled with uncertainty and self-condemnation, reveals indications of this more positive attitude.

Keats reiterates in the *Fall* his insistence that the poet must confine his imagination to the concrete and living world:

The poet and the dreamer are distinct,  
Diverse, sheer opposite, antipodes (I, 199-200).

No passion is good unless it has as its end the good of human beings. The poet cries out to Moneta:

"High Prophetess," said I, "purge off  
Benign, if so it please thee, my mind's film—"  
"None can usurp this height," returned that shade,  
"But those to whom the miseries of the world  
Are misery, and will not let them rest" (I, 145-149).

Such people

"are no dreamers weak,  
*They seek no wonder but the human face.*

<sup>2</sup> *Letters*, p. 335.

<sup>3</sup> *Letters*, p. 316.

<sup>4</sup> To Taylor, Nov. 17, 1819, *ibid.*, p. 439-440.



"Thou art a dreaming thing,  
A fever of thyself—*think of the Earth*" (I, 162-169).

It is not easy to parallel such a complete transition of mind as manifested itself in Keats's verse from the spring of 1819 to the following autumn. That he himself was aware of the significance of this change may be detected in the bitterness of his condemnation of his former attitude, but it is shown even more by his confidence in his newly-won belief: "What am I that should so be saved from death?" he asks:

Then said the veiled shadow—"Thou hast felt  
What 'tis to die and live again before  
Thy fated hour. That thou hadst power to do so  
Is thy own safety" (I, 141-144).

"Some think," wrote Keats while revising *Hyperion*, "I have lost that poetic ardour and fire 'tis said I once had—the fact is perhaps I have: but instead of that I hope I shall substitute a more thoughtful and quiet power."<sup>5</sup> Like its theme, the prosodic form in which the *Fall of Hyperion* was written reveals a somewhat calmer, a less uncertain state of mind than had dictated the composition of *Lamia*. For Keats returned again to blank verse, a medium in which he had hardly an equal in proficiency since Milton. The blank verse of this revision, however, was considerably different from that of the earlier version, and its manner of divergence is twofold: it reveals drastic excision of a few of the Miltonic rhetorical peculiarities found in the original version; and like *Lamia* it represents as well a distinct departure from the general technical direction of *Hyperion*, the *Eve of St. Agnes*, and the odes.

In the discussion of *Hyperion*, emphasis was laid on the extent to which the Miltonic effect of paragraphing was owing to Milton's habitual employment of medial full-stops; and I added the conjecture that the length of these stops is increased by the frequency (70%) with which they conclude on an accented syllable. Medial full-stopping upon accented syllables had been almost equally common in *Hyperion* (64.7%), but in the revision it is decreased (56.7%). The difference in degree of length of full

<sup>5</sup> To George and Georgiana Keats, Sept. 17 to 27, 1819; *ibid.*, p. 421.

stops after an accented or unaccented syllable may be illustrated by two examples:

But horrors, portion'd to a giant nerve,  
Oft made Hyperion ache. (xx) His palace bright . . .  
(*Hyperion*, I, 175-176).

Soft-showering in mine ears; and, by the touch  
Of scent, not far from roses. (x) Turning round,  
I saw an harbour . . . (*Fall of Hyperion*, I, 23-25).

As in *Paradise Lost*, medial full stops appear most frequently after the fourth and sixth syllables in *Hyperion*: 62.2% of its medial full stops are placed thus, whereas only 50% have this position in the recast. The medial full stops of *Hyperion*, when not on the fourth or sixth syllable, are usually on the fifth or seventh (24.1%) with few outside of the fourth to the seventh syllable limit (13.7%). Greater metrical license in the revised form, however, is shown not only in the increased frequency with which the full stop appears after the fifth or seventh syllable (32.4%) but also outside of the fourth to the seventh syllable range (17.6%).

The "Miltonic inversions" with which, Keats thought, even his revised *Fall of Hyperion* was disfigured,<sup>6</sup> are drastically excised. Instances in which the noun is followed by one or more adjectives were discussed in the analysis of *Hyperion*, and probably need no illustration now.<sup>7</sup> In *Hyperion*, 62 of such inversions are present, or a consistent average of one in every 14 lines. But in the revision it appears only 16 times, or an average of once in 33 lines. Inversion in *Hyperion* is likewise secured by placing the verb before the noun. A few examples will suffice:

Pale wox I, and in vapours hid my face (I, 326).

No more than winds and tides can I avail (I, 342).

There saw she direct strife . . . (II, 92).

Thus grew up . . . (II, 129).

There are 17 such inversions in *Hyperion*, or one in every 52 lines; I find only 3 in the recast, or one in every 176½ lines.

<sup>6</sup> *Letters*, pp. 384, 425.

<sup>7</sup> See above, pp. 70-71.

Bridges has remarked upon the recession of accent in Milton of such words as "unknown," "extreme," "uncouth," "sublime," and "supreme," and "without."<sup>8</sup> Such recession of accent is not uncommon in *Hyperion*, as, for example, "unknown" (II, 95), "unlike" (I, 34, 328), "uncurl'd" (II, 46), or "without" (II, 226); but they hardly ever occur in the *Fall of Hyperion*. The word "supreme," to give an instance, is used twice in *Hyperion*, and in both cases the accent is receded (II, 92; III, 61); it is used twice in the revision also, but the accent is normal in both instances (I, 226, 416).

The blank verse of this revision, however, represents a departure in another, far more drastic respect; for despite its frequent inevitability of phrasing, and its occasional quiet power of image, this poem, like *Lamia*, is in its entire metrical character a reversal of the direction along which *Hyperion*, the *Eve of St. Agnes* and the odes had made such remarkable advance—a direction which had assumed as its goal an intensity at once elaborate and weightily rich and at the same time disciplined and carefully restrained.

It is of some interest that in the quiet and at times uncertain blank verse of this poem, as in *Lamia*, there are almost as few epithets addressed to senses other than sight as in Keats's early verse.<sup>9</sup> Epithets ending in *ed* are found (18.1%)<sup>10</sup>—as in "domèd monument" (I, 71), "embossèd roof" (I, 83), and "filmèd clouds" (I, 63)—but they represent something of a decrease from *Hyperion* (19%) and the *Eve of St. Agnes* (24.9%). As in *Lamia*, moreover, it may be questioned whether they are characterized by that extraordinary concentration of energy, made momentarily still, which had been present in such epithets in *Hyperion*, the *Eve of St. Agnes*, and the odes, and they have little about them to

<sup>8</sup> *Milton's Prosody* (1901), pp. 53-63.

<sup>9</sup>

	Touch	Epithets addressed to			Hearing
		Taste	Smell		
<i>Endymion</i> , I:	1.6% (19)	.3% (4)	.1½% (2)		1.1% (14)
<i>Isabella</i> :	6.5% (36)	1.1% (6)	.7% (4)		1.3% (7)
<i>Hyperion</i> , I:	7.1% (26)	.7% (3)	.2% (1)		4.5% (18)
<i>Eve of St. Agnes</i> :	8.5% (39)	1.3% (6)	.9% (4)		5% (23)
<i>Lamia</i> , I:	2.9% (13)	.5% (2)	0		.5% (2)
<i>Fall of Hyperion</i> :	3.4% (21)	.3% (2)	.8% (5)		1.8% (11)

<sup>10</sup> (111); figured against total number of adjectives. See above, pp. 95-97, in the discussion of the *Eve of St. Agnes*.

compel the reader to linger and absorb. There is more frequent use than in *Lamia*, even, of active participial adjectives, such as the "soon-fading jealous Caliphat" (I, 48), "the sickening East wind" (I, 47), and "drooping white" (I, 194): they total 4.7%<sup>11</sup> of the adjectives, and contrast strongly, for example, with the *Eve of St. Agnes* (1.9%). It may be added that—in contradistinction to the syntactical direction which Keats's verse in general assumed after *Isabella*, by which the adjective was excised and the potentialities of the verb were fully drawn upon—adjectives (14.9%)<sup>12</sup> are now, as in the early sonnets and couplets, more frequent than verbs (13.5%).<sup>13</sup>

But phonetically, as well, the diction of this revision represents a departure from the earlier *Hyperion* and from the other verse written after *Hyperion* and before *Lamia*, where the diction had grown increasingly shorter, more native in origin, and stronger in consonantal texture. That of the *Fall of Hyperion* is more Latin in origin and consequently more polysyllabic as well as softer in phonetic body:

Fanatics have their dreams, wherewith they weave  
A paradise for a sect; the savage too  
From forth the loftiest fashion of his sleep  
Guesses at Heaven: pity these have not  
Trac'd upon vellum or wild Indian leaf  
The shadows of melodious utterance.  
But bare of laurel they live, dream, and die;  
For Poesy alone can tell her dreams,  
With the fine spell of words alone can save  
Imagination from the sable charm  
And dumb enchantment (I, 1-11).

Latinity is higher in this poem<sup>14</sup> than in even *Endymion*, and is excelled only by *Lamia*. Liquid consonants are present in far more abundance than in the verse written between *Isabella* and *Lamia*. Accented historically "long" vowels, which had been so prevalent in *Hyperion*, the *Eve of St. Agnes*, and the odes, are hardly more common than in *Lamia*.<sup>15</sup> Again as in *Lamia*,

<sup>11</sup> (24).

<sup>12</sup> (606); figured from the total number of words in the poem (4068).

<sup>13</sup> (548).

<sup>14</sup> 15.8% (643).

<sup>15</sup> They amount, for example, to only 21% (97) of the vowels in I, 1-46, a frequency almost as low as the passage analyzed from *Lamia* (II, 1-45: 20.5%).

no such mosaic of assonance is present as had been consciously striven for in the verse written between the previous autumn and the following May. A few instances, indeed, may be found which are reminiscent:

Be Poet's or Fanatic's will be known (I, 17).

When in mid-May the sickening East wind (I, 97).

Melts out the frozen incense from all flowers (I, 99).

But such instances are extremely few, and the intricacy of their interplay is negligible when compared with those in the earlier version, in the *Eve of St. Agnes*, and in the odes.

Similarly, pyrrhic feet, as in *Lamia*, are now frequent (12.5%),<sup>16</sup> and often occur twice within the line, as in

In neigh / borhood / of fount / ains, by / the noise

Soft-show / ering in / mine ears; / and, by / the touch . . .

The sup / erann / uat / ions of / sunk realms (I, 22-23, 68).

Just as stress-failure is abundantly drawn on, doubly stressed feet, as in *Lamia*, are avoided. For the spondaic feet of this revision (6%),<sup>17</sup> though well above the average for English verse and by no means as rare as in *Lamia*, hardly occur half as frequently as in *Hyperion*, the *Eve of St. Agnes*, and the odes.

Many of the disciplinary measures, moreover, upon which Keats had increasingly drawn, beginning with *Isabella*, are like-

<sup>16</sup> (333); figured from the total number of feet (2645).

<sup>17</sup> (161).

wise absent from the relaxed blank verse of this revision. Foremost among them is the decrease of the masculine pause; and there is a tendency, for the first time since *Endymion*, towards the weak or feminine cæsure. For the most frequent pause, as in the early sonnets and couplets, is now the weak medial or fifth-syllable cæsure,<sup>18</sup> as in

Guesses at Heaven: (x) pity these have not  
Trac'd upon vellum (x) or wild Indian leaf.

Imagination (x) from the sable charm  
And dumb enchantment. (x) Who alive can say (I, 4-5, 10-11).

Such a practice is indeed in marked contrast to all other verse written after *Endymion*, in which—except in *Hyperion*, where the masculine, Miltonic, sixth-syllable pause is dominant—preference had been increasingly given to the classical, masculine, fourth-syllable cæsure.

Hiatus, or vowel-gaping, is abundant in the *Fall of Hyperion*, and is often even present twice in the same line:

These steps, die on that marble where thou art (I, 108).

And thou art here, for thou art less than they (I, 166).

So at the view of sad Moneta's brow (I, 275)

Of things as nimbly as the outward view (I, 305).

Hiatus had been prevalent in the early couplets (19.3%), in opposition to all Augustan metrical tradition, and had thereafter, beginning even in *Endymion*, been severely decreased with chronological regularity to an amount (4%) not greatly above even that of Pope. But in the revised *Hyperion* it returns to its pristine abundance (18.1%),<sup>19</sup> and I question whether hiatus is as frequent in any other pentameter poem, with any claim to excellence, which has been written since the time of Dryden.

<sup>18</sup> After 2nd: 1.7% (9); 3rd: 7% (37); 4th: 21.7% (115); 5th: 23% (122); 6th: 20.2% (107); 7th: 9.2% (49); 8th: 1.5% (8); double or triple: 15.5% (82). Cf., for example, *Hyperion*, above, pp. 75-76.

<sup>19</sup> (96).

It is almost certain that Keats, at the time of this revision, was re-reading Dante, both in the original and in Cary's translation, and Mr. Lowes has illustrated the extent to which the entire structural background of the poem is based on the *Purgatorio*.<sup>20</sup> It is consequently of some interest, perhaps even significance, that a few close parallels exist between the versification of the *Fall* and Cary's *Purgatory*. Among other similarities, Cary's loose blank verse had been characterized by an abnormal abundance of hiatus (17.5%).<sup>21</sup>

Run-on lines had perhaps been fewer in *Hyperion* (34%) than in any blank-verse, except that of Young and Blair, since the early Elizabethans. But Keats was now less zealous in his attempt to attain severity of structural outline. Run-on lines in the re-cast rise to 40%—again closely paralleling Cary's *Purgatory* (40.8%)<sup>22</sup> and may often occur in four or more lines together:

In neighbourhood of fountains, by the noise  
Soft-showering in mine ears; and, by the touch  
Of scent, not far from roses. Turning round,  
I saw an arbour with a drooping roof  
Of trellis vines, and bells, and larger bloom (I, 22-26).

The unstressed beginning—that is to say, an initial pyrrhic foot, as in

or in *Of the / soon-fad / ing jeal / ous Cal / iphat* (I, 48)

*Like a / Silen / us on / an an / tique vase* (I, 56)—

had been diminished successively from 10.7% in the *Epistle to Mathew*, through 8% in *Endymion* and 6.7% in *Isabella*, to 2.6% in *Hyperion*<sup>23</sup> and 2.4% in the *Eve of St. Agnes*. It had

<sup>20</sup> *T. L. S.*, January 11, 1936, p. 35.

<sup>21</sup> (46); figured from the first two Cantos of the *Purgatory*.

\* (220); figured from the first four cantos, *ibid.* The parallel should not be over-emphasized. Cary's average is a good mean for English blank verse in general. But other, less usual, similarities are close enough to justify the assumption that Cary's use of run-on lines was probably combined with the impression of additional and more definite characteristics of his lax and often quiet blank verse; and that they thus contributed to an amalgamated and general temper of structure which, for Keats's ear, served at least as a partial guide.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. *Paradise Lost*: 2.5%. See above, pp. 78–79.

returned a bit in *Lamia* (3.5%); in the *Fall of Hyperion*, it is once more almost as frequent (6%)<sup>24</sup> as it had been in *Isabella*, and illustrates another similarity with Cary's *Purgatory* (6.7%).<sup>25</sup> In a similar way, the unstressed ending—

˘   ˘   ˘   ˘   ˘   ˘   ˘   ˘   ˘  
 So fine, / so subt / le, felt / the tyr / anny (I, 119)—

which had likewise been decreased with chronological regularity after *Endymion*, is present in a degree (8.9%) surpassing even that in the sonnets and couplets which, with the metrical precedent of Hunt before him, Keats had first written.

Keats was dissatisfied with this recast of *Hyperion*, which contains so complete a rejection, metrically speaking, of all that he had previously exploited to secure the simultaneous impassioned intensity of sound, of epithet, and of image and at the same time the rigorous and sober severity of structure and outline which, taken together, constituted for him that poetry which was

the supreme of power,—  
 'Tis might half slumb'ring on its own right arm.

He said that the shadow of Milton was still too strongly upon this revision.<sup>26</sup> Yet he sensed as well the uncertainty that underlay the entire structure and conception of the poem. For his almost fierce rejection of an impassioned "intensity," a rejection of which more than faint presentiments are apparent in the letters of the preceding spring, and which would seem to have crystallized before the composition of *Lamia*—leading him in that poem to break radically, with extreme and almost desperate resolution, from the entire direction he had hitherto taken:—this almost feverish and bewildered renunciation, calmer and more settled though it be, and tempered by a more positive and optimistic strain, is apparent throughout both the theme and uncertain prosodic structure of the *Fall of Hyperion*. But this uncertainty seems to have appeared to Keats as only the accompaniment, however painfully real, of an intermediate

<sup>24</sup> (32).

<sup>25</sup> (36); figured from Cantos I-IV.

<sup>26</sup> *Letters*, pp. 384 and 425 (to Reynolds, Sept. 21, 1819, and to George and Georgiana Keats, Sept. 17-27, 1819).



stage—of that stage, which he had long since suspected, when the “Chamber of Maiden Thought becomes gradually darken’d and at the same time on all sides of it many doors are set open—but all dark . . . and we feel the ‘burden of the Mystery.’”<sup>27</sup> That he was determined to continue along the passage-way which he had taken from this “Chamber” is made manifest by his statement, written not a month after the revision of *Hyperion* was completed:

Wonders are no wonders to me. I am more at home amongst Men and Women. I would rather read Chaucer than Ariosto. The little dramatic skill I may as yet have however badly it might shew in a Drama will I think be sufficient for a Poem. . . . Two or three such Poems if God should spare me, written in the course of the next 6 years wo<sup>d</sup> be a famous Gradus ad Parnassum altissimum. I mean they would nerve me up to the writing of a few fine plays—my greatest ambition when I do feel ambitious.<sup>28</sup>

## 3

## TO AUTUMN

The last great poem, however, which Keats was to write after concluding his revision of *Hyperion* constituted a complete return in both emotional and prosodic conception to the great odes of the preceding May. The diction, like that of the other odes, is almost monosyllabic, strong in consonantal body, and English in origin:

Where are the songs of Spring? Ay, where are they?  
 Think not of them, thou hast thy music too,—  
 While barr'd clouds bloom the soft-dying day,  
 And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue;  
 Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn  
 Among the river sallows, borne aloft  
 Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies;  
 And full-grown lambs loud bleat from hilly bourn.

Bilabial consonants, which Keats had so commonly employed in *Hyperion*, the *Eve of St. Agnes*, and the other odes, are equally abundant now: “Drows’d with the fume of *poppies*”; “Or by a

<sup>27</sup> *Letters*, p. 144.

<sup>28</sup> To Taylor, Nov. 17, 1819, pp. 439–440.

cider-press with patient look"; "And full grown lambs loud bleat from hilly bourn." Or to take the entire first stanza:

Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness,  
 Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun;  
 Conspiring with him how to load and bless  
 With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eves run;  
 To bend with apples the moss'd cottage-trees,  
 And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;  
 To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells  
 With a sweet kernel; to set budding more,  
 And still more, later flowers for the bees,  
 Until they think warm days will never cease,  
 For Summer has o'er-brimm'd their clammy cells.

"Long" vowels are dominant, and spondaic feet are drawn upon as never before (13.9%),<sup>1</sup> except in the *Grecian Urn* and the *Ode on Melancholy*. Senses other than that of sight are once again appealed to, as in the inspired alteration from "Drows'd with red poppies" (17) to "Drows'd with the fume of poppies"; and Keats's former happy preference for the passive verbal participle as epithet is once again given free play, as in the transition from "While a gold cloud" (25) to "While barr'd clouds"; or—to take an instance almost reminiscent of the alterations from "fading moon" to "faded moon" (*St. Agn.* xxix, 1) and from "Cooling an age" to "Cool'd a long age" (*Night*, ii, 2)—as in the substitution for "twining flowers" (18) of "twined flowers."

Rigorous structural care is once again apparent at every hand: hiatus is non-existent; medial inversion of accent occurs only once;<sup>2</sup> the strict Augustan device of initial inversion of accent alone is relied upon for variety, and is employed more frequently (4.2%)<sup>3</sup> than in any other lyric of Keats except the *Ode to a Nightingale*; and an even more severely orthodox distribution of pause is employed than in the previous odes.<sup>4</sup> It is enough to add that the stanza of the ode differs from that of the earlier ones in consisting of eleven rather than ten lines, and

<sup>1</sup> (23).

<sup>2</sup> L. 25.

<sup>3</sup> (7).

<sup>4</sup> After 2nd Syll.: 3% (1); 3rd: 6% (2); 4th: 30.3% (10); 5th: 24.2% (8); 6th: 18.1% (6); 7th: 12.1% (4); 8th: 3% (1); double or triple: 3% (1).

in introducing a couplet before the concluding line. The former stanza, it will be remembered, consisted of what amounted to a quatrain from the Shakespearian octave, *abab*, followed, in the main, by a strictly Petrarchan sestet, *cde cde*. The rhyme-scheme of *Autumn* is *abab* and, in the first stanza, *cde dcce*; in the other two, *cde cddc*. The reversion here to the couplet, which Keats had previously condemned, is intentional. As Fitzgerald said of the third line of the Omar Khayyám quatrain, the couplet here rises slowly, like the crest of a wave, momentarily lifting the stanza, and then allowing it to subside in the concluding line. It is thus that Keats doubtless meant it to be. The lines of the couplets, weighted with consonants, sonorous vowels, and heavily packed imagery, move with stately and considered slowness. There is nothing hurried or "pouncing" about the rhymes of these couplets. Their only effect is to lift the body of the stanza with deliberate leisure, and then allow it to subside and "set soberly although in magnificence, leaving [the reader] in the Luxury of twilight."

And thus Keats returned—if to deliver only the briefest yet most serene and flawless of swan-songs—to that instinctive delight in the things of the earth which had given birth to the great odes the preceding May. For poetry, to Keats, despite the almost chaotic transition of mind which he had undergone since concluding the odes, still consisted above all else in the restrained but highly impassioned exercise of the five senses. That was poetical for Keats about which the senses could play, with which the senses could be absorbed, and which, like the Grecian Urn, can "tease us out of thought." When he had written, only four months before,

My heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains  
My sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk,

it was "not," he insisted, "from envy of" the nightingale's "happy lot"; it was from "being too happy in thine happiness," from having achieved a rich and absorbing satisfaction for a nostalgic and sensuous yearning. It was to gratify this craving for a completeness, at once intense and restrained, which had led Keats, by both a happy intuition and the most conscious artistry, to "concentrate," to quote Bridges, "all the far-reaching resources of language upon one point, so that a single and appa-

rently effortless expression results when the æsthetic imagination is most expectant and exacting"; it had led him to condense his imagery into a static but potentially dynamic repose, and to reject the sonnet in favor of the

grandeur of the ode,  
Growing, like Atlas, stronger from its load.

It had led him to create a stanza majestic and staid in its restraint; to draw almost instinctively upon a monosyllabic and consonantal diction, native in origin, and rich in sensuous connotation; to employ intricate patterns of vowel interplay; to preserve with cautious skill the integrity of the line and yet weight it liberally with spondaic feet; to adopt whatever means, phonetic, pictorial, or connotative, which would "load every rift with ore," and allow each line to "set soberly, although in magnificence." And it led him finally, on a Sunday late in September, despite the rather desperate determination of three months before, to succumb once again to that organic longing, which had never left him, for self-absorption in the beauty and richness of the concrete world:

How beautiful the season is now—How fine the air . . . I never lik'd stubble-fields so much as now—Aye better than the chilly green of the Spring. Somehow a stubble-plain looks warm—in the same way that some pictures look warm—This struck me so much that I composed upon it.<sup>5</sup>

And in thus "composing upon it," Keats returned, if for the last time, to the rich abundance of the lowlands; and, in doing so, he once again "served Mammon."

It is true that the development of Keats during these final four months was fundamentally an intellectual and emotional rather than a strictly technical crystallization of what had long been maturing. By the time of the composition of the odes, Keats had already attained such rare mastery of phrase, and so mature a craftsmanship, that it hardly seems conceivable that he could have advanced much further. This brief Apolline noon, however, was succeeded by a troubled sky; and a transition of more telling yet distressing interest rapidly made itself manifest. For the maturing Keats, who had in him so much of Chaucer

<sup>5</sup> To Reynolds, Sept. 21, 1819, *Letters*, p. 384.

and of Shakespeare, was becoming a man whose experience was being darkened by clouds which he did not live to see pass.

Yet the character of this transition is mirrored, and Keats's adaptability as a craftsman in verse is strikingly illuminated, by the peculiar and at times uncertain course of his stylistic evolution during the course of these months. Such an evolution was no more than a concluding episode, however, to a larger and more general stylistic development which, in the earlier course of its progress, took paths of perhaps far more technical interest than that upon which Keats last embarked. And it is simply some indication of the course and distinctive character of this more general stylistic development which I have tried to present.

## APPENDICES



## APPENDICES

### A

Keats's verse written before the end of 1815 (p. 8) is in the main cast in common eighteenth-century *genres*. The alternate-rhyming pentameter quatrain, for example, which was first used for elegy by Hammond and subsequently employed for the same purpose by Shenstone, Gray, Cary, Mickle, John Scott, and a host of others, is likewise used as an elegiac quatrain by Keats in the stanzas *On Death*, with strict adherence to the theoretical scansion of the line, and with all except one of the lines containing the common eighteenth-century masculine *cæsura*—a *cæsura*, that is to say, after a strong or accented syllable. The early *Ode to Apollo*, which, taking as its theme the representation of the passions by the music of verse, recalls similar declamatory odes of Dryden, Gray, and Collins, may probably have been influenced in stanzaic structure by Vansittart's ode, *The Pleasure of Poetry*, as has been contended. The basic stanza of the poem, at all events, was common in eighteenth-century odists from Hamilton and John Scott to the turn of the century. The pentameter *ababcc* stanzas of the didactic lyric, *To Hope*, though a relatively common Elizabethan form, had been revived for didactic verse and given more than its former popularity by Thomson, Cowper, Cunningham, Chatterton, William Julius Mickle, and others; the form chosen for the lines, "Fill for me a brimming bowl," was the common eighteenth-century Miltonic octosyllabic couplet; and the anapestic quatrains of *To Some Ladies*, with beginning iambic feet and with alternate feminine endings, was likewise a rather frequent eighteenth-century form for light and occasional verse (see, for example, Burns's *Chevalier's Lament*).

As characteristic as any of Keats's earliest poems written in these *genres* are the four Spenserian stanzas which comprize the *Imitation of Spenser*, which may be dated as 1813 or preferably 1814, and which, because of the typical eighteenth-century treatment of its versification, may serve as an instance in point. "Mrs. Tighe and Beattie," wrote Keats, "once delighted me";<sup>1</sup> and although he may not yet have read the Spenserian stanzas of Mary Tighe by the time of the composition of this poem, the *Imitation of Spenser* is closely akin in stanzaic technique—not to mention diction and imagery—to those Spenserian stanzas which, introduced largely by Thomson, Shenstone,

<sup>1</sup> To George and Georgiana Keats, Dec. 16, 1818—Jan. 4, 1819, *Letters*, p. 259.



and Armstrong, became particularly popular, as the eighteenth century progressed, in the hands of Beattie and of Burns, and which, with the turn of the century, were used by Leigh Hunt in his *Palace of Pleasure* and by Mary Tighe in her *Psyche*. As in almost all eighteenth-century Spenserian stanzas, each stanza of this poem, except for the last, is grammatically a single sentence. It is of some significance, again, that, in strict accordance with Augustan cæsural theory and practice (see Appendix G, pp. 203-209) and in direct contrast to the verse later written when the influence of Hunt was paramount, a total of 66.5% (23) of the cæsuras are masculine—that is, after a strong syllable, as in

There saw the swan (x) his neck of archèd snow,  
And oar'd himself along (x) with majesty;  
Sparkled his jetty eyes; (x) his feet did show  
Beneath the waves (x) like Afric's ebony (14-17).

Of much more significance is the structure of the stanza itself. For the formation of his stanza, Spenser had probably added a *c*-rhyming Alexandrine to the two interlacing quatrains (*ababbcbc*) of Chaucer's Monk's-Tale stanza. In his treatment of the stanza, Spenser tended to adhere to its natural quatrain division:<sup>2</sup> he frequently placed a full-stop after the first quatrain, *abab*, another almost as frequently after the second interlacing quatrain, *bcbc*, and thus on occasion retained the concluding Alexandrine as a separate unit. This management by Spenser of his stanza had been curiously followed by eighteenth-century employers of the stanza. They, too, used the first quatrain division and with far greater frequency, even, than had Spenser: characteristic is the first canto of Beattie's *Minstrel*,<sup>3</sup> where 75% (40) of the stanzas have a full-stop immediately after the fourth line; and the stop was even more frequently used by such "Spenserians" as Pitt, Wilkie, and especially the William Thompson whose ill-starred fame rests on his Miltonic blank-verse epic, *Sickness*. Eighteenth-century writers in the Spenserian stanza, however, in general avoided or neglected the second quatrain division—the stop, that is to say, between the eighth line and the concluding Alexandrine: in the first canto of Mrs. Tighe's *Psyche*, for example, as few as 4.6% (3) of the stanzas employ it. It is consequently of some interest that all of the stanzas of Keats's *Imitation of Spenser* likewise contain the fourth-line full-stop, as in

<sup>2</sup> For discussion of this treatment of the stanza, with precise analyses from Spenser, see above, pp. 101-5, in the section on the *Eve of St. Agnes*.

<sup>3</sup> For precise analyses of both fourth and eighth-line stoppage in other Augustan Spenserians, see above, p. 103, in the discussion of the *Eve of St. Agnes*.

There the kingfisher saw his plumage bright  
 Vieing with fish of brilliant dye below;  
 Whose silken fins and golden scales's light  
 Cast upward, through the waves, a ruby glow:  
 There saw the swan . . . (10-15).

But in none of these stanzas does the eighth-line full-stop appear; and in one instance the eighth line even runs on into the concluding Alexandrine:

In strife to throw upon the shore a gem  
 Outvieing all the buds in Flora's diadem (35-36).

## B

Of Keats's thirty-nine sonnets written before the close of 1817, all except one are composed, with many conventional Augustan peculiarities of structure, in the traditional eighteenth-century Petrarchan rhyme-scheme which, at the close of the century, had once again become the dominant sonnet-form. The single exception is Keats's earliest extant sonnet, *On Peace*, the rhyme-scheme of which is basically Shakespearean (*ababcdcd ddedee*). The irregularity of even this rhyme-scheme, however, is deliberate, and is hardly owing, as has on occasion been stated, to negligence or to ineptitude. Coleridge's contention in the preface to the sonnets in the second edition of his *Poems* (1797)—a copy of which Keats owned—that "Charlotte Smith and Bowles are they who first made the Sonnet popular among the present English," and that he was "justified therefore by analogy in deducing its laws from their composition" (p. 71) was no more than a belated advocacy of an irregularity which had long been consciously practised. The metrical variations of the sonnet *On Peace* are indeed conventional in nature: the insertion of the couplet at the opening of the sestet was not an uncommon phenomenon; Thomas Warton, whose sonnets were still read with respect,<sup>4</sup> had employed a couplet-opening sestet even in the Petrarchan form; Mrs. Tighe had inserted the couplet to divide the quatrains of the octave; and the use, such as is found in this sonnet, of a concluding Alexandrine had, by the practice of Mrs. Tighe, Bowles, Coleridge, and Hunt, become very much of a convention.

But the metrical structure of the next sonnet which chronologically follows *On Peace* is, like its diction and theme, inextricably a part of the eighteenth-century Petrarchan tradition. Together with the sonnet

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, in Hazlitt's *Lectures on the English Poets, Works* (ed. Howe, 1931-34), V, 120-121.

*To Chatterton*, which follows it by a month, *To Byron* (December, 1814) begins with the Miltonic vocative which was so abundant in the sonnets of the preceding century; the vocative concludes with a marked pause at the end of the line; and this line is then followed by a depending series of four lines, with the marked pause thus coming at the conclusion of the fifth line:

Byron! how sweetly sad thy melody!  
 Attuning still the soul to tenderness,  
 As if soft Pity, with unusual stress,  
 Had touch'd her plaintive lute, and thou, being by,  
 Hadst caught the tones, nor suffered them to die.

And the remaining three lines of the octave run on into the sestet, immediately after the wretched adverb "beamily":

O'ershadowing sorrow doth not make thee less  
 Delightful: thou thy griefs dost dress  
 With a bright halo, shining beamily,  
 As when a cloud . . .

This over-running of strict quatrain division in the Petrarchan sonnet, resulting simultaneously in the breakdown of octave-sestet separation and the utilization of pause within the body of the octave after the fifth rather than the fourth line, was a combination which was rather frequent in Russell, in Bowles, in the early sonnets of Coleridge, and in Thomas Warton. The *cæsura*, though slight, occurs immediately after the fourth syllable in exactly half the lines, and may sometimes continue to do so for an entire quatrain together:

As when a cloud (x) the golden moon doth veil,  
 Its sides are ting'd (x) with a resplendent glow,  
 Through the dark robe (x) oft amber rays prevail,  
 And like fair veins (x) in sable marble flow (9-12).

Such a practice, again, was quite in accordance with that of the eighteenth-century sonnet—or of any Augustan pentameter line, for that matter (see Appendix G, pp. 203-209)—and is in marked contrast to the *cæsural* placing in those sonnets which were published in the 1817 volume and in which the influence of Hunt is strongly manifest. As in the sonnets of all of Keats's immediate predecessors, except on occasion those of Hunt, medially inverted feet are totally absent in this sonnet; again as in his predecessors, there is not a single feminine ending.

Those sonnets written between February, 1815, when the influence of Hunt became paramount, and January, 1818, stem in the main from the same source, containing though they do an abundance of stylistic devices gleaned from the Elizabethans, from Hunt, and even from Wordsworth. All of these thirty-six sonnets are Petrarchan in rhyme-scheme, with sestet common in the sonnets of the century before;<sup>5</sup> and they contain prosodic peculiarities as traditional in the plaintive sonneteers as their rhyme-schemes. Occasional concluding Alexandrines, for example, are present (as in *To a Friend Who Sent Me Some Roses* and "Haydon! forgive me that I cannot speak"); and concluding Alexandrines had long since, in the hands of Bowles, Mary Tighe, Charlotte Smith, and others, become sufficiently a convention to have tempted Coleridge, in his parody on contemporary sonnets, *On a Ruined House*, to insert one at the close. The use of the vocative in an opening, run-on line, as in

Good Kosciusko, thy great name alone  
Is a full harvest . . .

or in

Haydon! forgive me that I cannot speak  
Definitively . . . ,

had, since it was found in Milton, been abundantly used by Mary Tighe and Helen Maria Williams, and to some extent by the Della Cruscan and by Warton. Again, a somewhat infrequent variation found in the Petrarchan octaves of the eighteenth-century sonnet—of which the octave of Mrs. Tighe's sonnet *On Death* is an instance in point—was the creation of gradual expansion throughout the octave by splitting (though not with rhyme) the first quatrain into two equal divisions and then retaining the second quatrain as a single unit. Such a variation occasionally occurs in the early Petrarchan octaves of Keats, as in *On Seeing the Elgin Marbles* or "As from the darkening gloom," or as in

<sup>5</sup> The great majority (nineteen) have the alternate-rhyming sestet (*cdcded*) which had been perhaps the most frequent sestet in the eighteenth-century Petrarchan sonnet and which was plentifully used by Wordsworth; six possess the tercet division in the sestet (*cdecde*), also frequent in Wordsworth and Hunt; three have the sestet *cdedec* and two *cdcdce*, each of which had been twice used by Milton and, though not frequently, had consequently been employed by his eighteenth-century imitators; and two contain the sestet *cdcdce*, which was used by Hunt, more frequently by Coleridge, and still more by Mary Tighe. One each, finally, concludes with *cdcdce* and *cdcdce*—rare in the Elizabethans but on occasion found in Wordsworth and his Augustan predecessors; with *cdedec*—twice used by Milton and afterwards both by the eighteenth-century plaintive sonneteers and by Wordsworth; and with the sestet *cdcdce* which, first employed by Wyatt, had been abundantly used by Sidney but which had received no subsequent use of any consequence before Bowles and Hunt.

Keen, fitful gusts are whisp'ring here and there  
Among the bushes half leafless and dry;

The stars look very cold about the sky,  
And I have many miles on foot to fare.

Yet feel I little of the cool bleak air,  
Or of the dead leaves rustling drearily,  
Or of those silver lamps that hang on high,  
Or of the distance from home's pleasant lair.

## C

In his attempt in his early sonnets (p. 10) to secure metrical variation, Keats, like Hunt, made liberal use of the pyrrhic foot, and,<sup>6</sup> in marked contrast to his later verse, avoided weighting his lines with spondees. The pyrrhic foot, or stress-failure, not infrequently appears twice within a line in these sonnets:

Highmind / edness, / a jeal / ousy / for good (*To Haydon*, 1):

or, in violation of eighteenth-century prosodic theory, it may appear three times:

And, as / I feast / ed on / its frag / rancy (*To a Friend*, 9).

Though to a somewhat less degree than Hunt,<sup>7</sup> Keats also made freer use of the trisyllabic foot than had the sonneteers of the preceding

<sup>6</sup> In the twenty-one sonnets of the 1817 volume, 6.9% (163) of the feet are pyrrhic; only 2.1% (52) are spondees.

<sup>7</sup> He would seem on occasion to have tried to avoid it. Thus, for example, he altered

to Is my / soul's pleas / ure. It cert / ainly / must be ("O Solitude," 12)

Is my / soul's pleas / ure; and / it sure / must be;

and he replaced

Following / the sail / ing cloud / let's bright / career ("To one who has been long," 11)  
with

Watching / the sail / ing cloud / let's bright / career.

century.<sup>8</sup> The abundance of trisyllabic feet in Chapman may likewise have furnished him with some precedent.<sup>9</sup> In such trisyllabic feet, furthermore, as permit possible elision in these sonnets, the elision is rarely effected by synaeresis—by the joining together, that is, of contiguous vowels, as in

Ah, no! / far hap / pier, nob / ler was / his fate (*Written on the Day*, 8)  
or in

Let me / write down / a line / of glor / ious tone (*On Leaving Some Friends*, 11);

but elision is more frequently brought about by syncope—by the dropping, that is, of a vowel flanked by two consonants, as in

What time / the sky / lark shakes / the trem / ulous dew,  
or in

Advent / urous knights / take up / their dint / ed shields ("As late I rambled," 2, 4).<sup>10</sup>

This preference for elision by syncope rather than by synaeresis is again symptomatic of the influence of Hunt<sup>11</sup>—possibly of Chapman as well<sup>12</sup>—and contrasts with the opposite preference not only in Augustan verse generally but in the later verse of Keats himself. It may be added, finally, that rare use<sup>13</sup> is made of trisyllabic feet which may not ordinarily be elided, as in

He star'd / at the / Pacif / ic and all / his men (*Chapman's Homer*, 12).

<sup>8</sup> A total of 1.5% (38) are trisyllabic in the sonnets of the 1817 volume. In Hunt the total is very high—4% (34)—in the twelve Petrarchan sonnets published before 1818 (the sonnets *To Barnes*, *To Alsager*, and *To Kosciusko*, the five sonnets *To Hampstead*, *The Poets*, *To the Grasshopper and the Cricket*, *Engraving of a Portrait of Rafael*, and "A steeple issuing").

<sup>9</sup> Thus, in the *Iliad*, I, 1-130, trisyllabic feet total 3.1% (29), a percentage not much below that of Hunt.

<sup>10</sup> Of the trisyllabic feet of these sonnets, only 31.6% (12) are elidable by synaeresis, while 50% (19) may be elided by syncope.

<sup>11</sup> Elidable by synaeresis, in the sonnets above instanced: 17.7% (6); by syncope: 82.3% (28).

<sup>12</sup> *Iliad*, I, 1-130: synaeresis—24.1% (7); syncope—69% (20).

<sup>13</sup> They total 13.1% (5) of the trisyllabic feet.

Such feet were avoided by Hunt in his sonnets,<sup>14</sup> but are not infrequently found in Chapman.<sup>15</sup>

## D

Divergence from the closed couplet had been infrequent throughout the eighteenth century.<sup>16</sup> It is perhaps a platitude that the closed couplet after Waller was almost universally extolled; but it is a platitude which bears repetition. Atterbury's praise of Waller's tightening of the couplet and his condemnation of earlier coupleteters—"There was no distinction of parts, no regular stops, nothing for the ear to rest upon—so that really Verse in those days was but downright Prose, tagg'd with Rhymes"<sup>17</sup> was characteristic; and I am conscious of no noteworthy breach of sentiment in critics or prosodists before the last quarter of the century. It is true that Watts thought he would vary his couplets by the introduction, to some extent, of the "cadence" of blank verse;<sup>18</sup> yet the caution of his practice cancels the strength of his precept, and the limits of what he considered radical are more indicative of conservatism than would have been a statement maintaining the opposite. It is also true that, although condemning "Donne and his contemporaries" as "dissolute and wild," Prior thought the couplet of Waller and of Dryden "too confined," producing "too frequent an identity in sound," and bringing "every couplet to the Point of an Epigram."<sup>19</sup> But even this contention, noticeable largely because of its rarity, must be qualified; for it is sometimes forgotten that Prior is here speaking solely of what he called the "Epic Style" and not of ordinary narrative or epistolary verse. There is, of course, much later in the century, the violent outburst of Joseph Weston's "Essay on the Superiority of Dryden's Versification over That of Pope,"<sup>20</sup> in which Pope is accused of intolerable monotony and artificiality, and which has, on the one or two instances in which

<sup>14</sup> Hunt's avoidance in his sonnets of unelidable trisyllabic feet was in keeping with the practice of Wordsworth, Southey, and other Romantic sonneteers; and even in the prosodic writing of the period, the earlier Augustan condemnation of such feet is frequently echoed (see, for example, John Carey, *Practical English Prosody and Versification* [1816], pp. 52-56).

<sup>15</sup> Thus about 7% (2) of the trisyllabic feet are unelidable in the *Iliad*, I, 1-130.

<sup>16</sup> See, however, Mr. Earl Wasserman's excellent discussion of "The Return of the Enjambed Couplet," in *ELH*, VII (1940), 239-52, to which I am much indebted.

<sup>17</sup> *Second Part of Mr. Waller's Poems* (1690), Preface, pp. vii-viii.

<sup>18</sup> *Horae Lyricae* (1709), Preface, p. xx.

<sup>19</sup> *Poems upon Several Occasions* (1718), Preface to *Solomon*, p. [390]. Or, again, see Sir Richard Blackmore's "Essay upon Epick Poetry," *Essays upon Several Subjects* (1716-17), I, 112.

<sup>20</sup> In John Morfitt's *Philotaxi Ardenae* (Birmingham, 1788).

it has been noted, been heralded as forward-looking and illustrative of a transition in eighteenth-century prosody. But Weston was a man of little consequence, who, by misquotation and paucity of examples, showed little acquaintance with Pope and not much more with Dryden, and whose charges were simply, to use his own words, "weak efforts towards undeceiving the deluded Admirers of Pope."<sup>21</sup>

During the course of this period when, especially in formal prosodic writing, the closed couplet continued to be extolled until well after Daniel Webb and Lord Kames, variety was conceived as a matter less of run-on lines and couplet-breaking than of a delicate readjustment of pause and stress within the individual line. Such variation alone was sought for as would in no way transgress the decasyllabic limits of the measure or injure the integrity of the particular line—which alone, to turn to Johnson, would "admit change without breach of order" and "relieve the ear without disappointing it";<sup>22</sup> it was largely a subtle and sensitive manipulation of pause and stress in which for Pope and his age variation consisted. And despite a slightly laxer use of the couplet by Goldsmith, Cowper, Crabbe, and a few others, it remained largely to Hunt to break the couplet entirely and simultaneously to add, as he also did in his sonnets, extreme variety of pause.

## E

In marked contrast with *Hyperion*, the *Eve of St. Agnes*, and Keats's later lyrics, the entire metrical tendency of his early couplets (p. 197) is towards rapidity of flow and perhaps even slackness of structure. Variation by the introduction of the spondee is even less common than in the sonnets (2.6%).<sup>23</sup> Stress-failure is present in abundance; and although Pope far more than most eighteenth-century writers had used light syllables to attain speed of line, Keats's use of pyrrhic feet is far greater (13% as compared to 7.5%).<sup>24</sup> Stress-failure is often deliberately introduced, as when

At which / he straight / way roused, / and 'gan / to tell (*End.*, I, 297)

is altered to

At which / he straight / way start / ed, and / 'gan tell.

<sup>21</sup> P. xxvi.

<sup>22</sup> "Life of Dryden," *Lives of the Poets* (ed. Hill, 1905), I, 467.

<sup>23</sup> (31); *End.*, I, 1-231.

<sup>24</sup> (151); *loc. cit.* The count from Pope is from the *Rape of the Lock*, II, 1-72: (27); *Cf. Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*, 1-84: 7.4% (40).



Pyrrhic feet are occasionally balanced by spondees, as in

Upon / the sides / of Lat / *mos was* / *outspread* (I, 63).

The free / *dom of* / *three steeds* / of dap / ple brown (I, 167).

A weakened line, however, sometimes results from two contiguous pyrrhics:

Of their / old pi / *ety*, / *and of* / their glee (I, 130)

O Hearn / *ener* / to the / loud clap / ping shears (I, 279),

—a practice condemned and avoided by prosodists and poets since the Elizabethans. Frequent use is made of the unstressed ending:

Nor do we merely feel these ess / ences

The passion poesy, glories in / finite

Will trace the story of Endym / ion (I, 25, 29, 35).

And unstressed endings—which, though they were increasingly diminished, remained to some extent in all of Keats's verse—total 7.5% (151) of the first two books of *Endymion*. The unstressed beginning—the use, that is, of an opening pyrrhic—is even more frequent:

From the / white flock, but pass'd unworrièd

With a / faint breath of music, which ev'n then

And in / his left he held a basket full (I, 75, 115, 155).

Such unstressed openings, however, which were traditionally regarded as a weakening of the line,<sup>25</sup> were radically excised by Keats; and even

<sup>25</sup> Among the prosodists of Keats's own day, however, occasional sanction seems to have been given such opening pyrrhics when they are immediately followed by a spondee (see, for example, John Carey, edition cited, pp. 40–41).

during the period of these couplets (1815-17) they dropped from 10.7% (10) in the *Epistle to Mathew* to about 8% in *Endymion*.<sup>26</sup>

The frequency of feminine endings in the early sonnets has been emphasized, and it has been suggested that, as precedent in this liberal use of the feminine ending, Keats had Shakespeare and possibly Fletcher (p. 16). Feminine endings are far more frequent in the couplets of the 1817 volume than they were, even, in the sonnets, and may occur consecutively in as many as eight lines together:

More strange, more beautiful, more smooth, more regal,  
Than wings of swans, than doves, than dim-seen eagle?  
What is it? And to what shall I compare it?  
It has a glory, and nought else can share it:  
The thought thereof is awful, sweet, and holy,  
Chacing away all worldliness and folly;  
Coming sometimes like fearful claps of thunder,  
Or the low rumblings earth's regions under (*Sleep and Poetry*, 21-23).

And the feminine endings in these couplets, in the 1817 volume, total no less than 24% (88)—a percentage far greater than that of Browne (7%)<sup>27</sup> or of Hunt (6.2%),<sup>28</sup> who were themselves very partial in their use of them; and this total, as far as I am aware, is unequalled by any English writer in the couplet since the Elizabethans. But the feminine ending was drastically reduced in *Endymion* (to 5½%)<sup>29</sup>; and, by the time of the writing of *Lamia*, it was almost wholly abolished.

As in the sonnets, Keats again followed Hunt and possibly Chapman<sup>30</sup> in making plentiful use of the trisyllabic foot, using even more in *Endymion* (2.2%)<sup>31</sup> than formerly. It would seem that Keats was now making more of a conscious attempt to introduce trisyllabic feet wherever possible. Instances are rather frequent in the manuscript revisions of *Endymion* where—in direct contrast to his later practice, when he strove to do the precise opposite—lines are altered with little other apparent reason than the admission of such feet. Some other purpose may possibly have helped dictate the change of

Over / his wan / èd corse / the cryst / al shower (II, 482)

<sup>26</sup> (39); from I, 1-488.

<sup>27</sup> (134); first two Songs of *Britannia's Pastorals*, Book I.

<sup>28</sup> (36); *Story of Rimini*, I and II.

<sup>29</sup> See Ridley, p. 305.

<sup>30</sup> See above, p. 10.

<sup>31</sup> (25); I, 1-231. All counts of trisyllable feet in *Endymion* are from these lines.

to

Over / his wan / èd corse / the trem / ulous shower.

It might perhaps be maintained, also, that the insertion of an unelidable trisyllabic foot was not the sole reason for such alterations as that of the ghastly

Cupids, awake! or black and blue we'll pinch  
Your dimpled arms . . . (II, 505-6)

to the scarcely more felicitous

Rise, Cupids! or we'll give the blue-bell pinch

To your dim / pled arms . . .

But one is not persuaded that any noteworthy gain, save the addition of an elidable trisyllabic foot, results from the replacement of

Who would / not be / so bound? / but, fool / ish elf (II, 461)

with

Who would / not be / so impris / on'd? but, / fond elf.

Again, as in Hunt and Chapman, and as they were formerly and contemporaneously in Keats's sonnets, elidable trisyllabic feet are effected by syncope (64%)<sup>32</sup>—

The fresh / ness of / the space / of heav / en above (I, 85)—

rather than by synaeresis (24%)<sup>33</sup>—

The pass / ion po / esy, glor / ies in / finite (I, 29);

while trisyllabic feet unelidable by an conventional means—avoided by almost all other contemporary poets and vociferously condemned by the prosodists of the eighteenth century and of Keats's own day—are even more frequent (totalling 12% of the trisyllabic feet) than

<sup>32</sup> (16); figured against the total number of trisyllabic feet.

<sup>33</sup> (6).

before:

Its del / icate am / ber; and / the dair / y pails (I, 44)

Their share / of the dit / ty. Af / ter them / appear'd (I, 163).

Initial inversion of accent, as in

Full of / sweet dreams, and health, and quiet breathing (I, 5),—

traditionally regarded as, next to stress-failure, the most legitimate means of metrical variation, is still not very high in *Endymion* (3.8%)<sup>34</sup> and the other couplets, as had been the case in Chapman, Hunt, and Keats's own early sonnets. And though it was later to be almost abolished, medial inversion—which, in opposition to all Augustan and even early nineteenth-century standards, Hunt had advocated and practiced, and of which the lion's share of precedent for Keats had been held by Chapman—is higher in *Endymion* (1.7%)<sup>35</sup> than it had been in the sonnets, the inversion often being very marked:

Trees old, / and young, / sprouting / a shad / y boon (I, 14)

And such / too is / the grand / eur of / the dooms (I, 20)

His ag / ed head, / crownèd / with beech / en wreath (I, 159).

## F

Although the approximation in placing of pause between Fairfax and Keats's *Isabella* (p. 34) is by no means as close as the former, almost perfect agreement between that of Hunt and Keats's earlier verse, yet the example of Fairfax may possibly have had some slight influence on the caesural distribution of *Isabella*. For in *Isabella*, Keats

<sup>34</sup> (44); from I, 1-231.

<sup>35</sup> (20); *loc. cit.* Here, and in all other counts of inverted feet—initial or medial, I have not excluded (except on those occasions in *Hyperion*, where it seems certain that recession of accent was intended) words in which it may be claimed that the stress might have been purposely receded. Thus, for example, I have scanned "into" or "unto" as medially inverted feet when they appear as

Pouring / unto / us from / the heav / en's brink (*End.*, I, 24).

left the weak mid-pause, or post-fifth-syllable cæsure, placed his pause more frequently after the orthodox fourth syllable, made greater use of double and triple pauses, and cut the weak Huntian post-seventh-syllable cæsure; and the order of preference—4, 5, 6, 7, 3, —is, as in Fairfax, the traditional one in English verse:

<i>Endymion</i> , I, 1-325	<i>Fairfax's Tasso</i> , I	<i>Isabella</i>
		1: .6% (3)
2: 1.8% (6)	2: 4.5% (9)	2: 3.9% (20)
3: 7.7% (25)	3: 2% (4)	3: 8.3% (42)
4: 24.5% (26)	4: 44.5% (89)	4: 29.2% (147)
5: 29.3% (95)	5: 17% (34)	5: 22.7% (114)
6: 18.6% (60)	6: 13.5% (27)	6: 18.1% (91)
7: 11.6% (48)	7: 6% (12)	7: 9.3% (47)
8: 1.2% (4)	8: .5% (1)	8: .8% (2)
Double or triple cæsuras:	2.4% (9) 12% (24)	7.1% (36)

Keats, who like Hunt had rather sparingly used the traditional metrical variation of the initially inverted foot—

*Made their* / cheeks paler by the breath of June (*Is.*, iv, 2)—

continued to do so (3.3%);<sup>36</sup> but then Fairfax himself had not used it very much (3.4%).<sup>37</sup> Although medially inverted feet—

So once / *more* *he* / had waked / and ang / uishèd (vii, 1)—

are high when compared with Fairfax (1.2%<sup>38</sup> as compared to .6%<sup>39</sup>), they nonetheless represent a considerable drop from their frequency in the earlier verse, when the influence of Hunt and Chapman was strong. Although—perhaps because of the example of Milton, whom Keats was now reading—somewhat more trisyllabic feet are found than formerly (2.3%<sup>40</sup> compared with 2.1% in *Endymion*), yet these feet, when elidable, have already become, somewhat more than formerly, elidable in the Augustan fashion by synaeresis—

The qui / et glooms / of such / a pit / *eous* theme (xix, 8)—

<sup>36</sup> (27); figured from the 800 feet of ll. 1-160. All analyses of feet in *Isabella*, except trisyllabic feet (which are figured from the entire poem) are taken from these lines.

<sup>37</sup> (34); from I, 1-120.

<sup>38</sup> (10).

<sup>39</sup> (6); from I, 1-200.

<sup>40</sup> (58).

and less by syncope—

Before / the door / had giv / en her to / his eyes (iii, 2).<sup>41</sup>

The common Miltonic elision by apocope, as in

Thy hand / by unwel / come press / ing would / not fear (viii, 6),

is far more frequent (20% of the trisyllabic feet in *Isabella* as compared to 8% in *Endymion*); and actual trisyllabic feet—such as

Of the gard / en terrace, towards him they bent (xxiii, 3)—

have been halved from *Endymion* to only 5.1% (3) of the total number of trisyllabic feet. Variation by unstressed or pyrrhic feet has very slightly decreased (13% in *Endymion* to 12.8%<sup>42</sup>); and Keats's tendency in his later verse to weight his lines with spondees—

As two / close He / brews in / that land / inspired (xvii, 3)—

is already perceptible in the doubling of spondaic feet in *Endymion* (2.6%) to 5% (43) in *Isabella*.

## G

Since little has been written about the placing of pause for almost a century, and since nothing at all has been written about the history of it, it was believed that Keats's several transitions in cæsural placing might be rendered clearer and more appreciable if a standard for estimating them were presented. Such a standard is best served by a brief delineation of English cæsural practice in general from Elizabethan times until Keats's own day, with emphasis on the eighteenth-century theory and practice of pause from which Keats at first radically departed and to which he later returned.

In pentameter verse written from the beginning of the Elizabethan period until Milton preference in the placing of pause is almost in-

<sup>41</sup> Elidable by synaeresis: 32.7% (19); by syncope: 51.7% (30). Cf. *End.*, I, 1-231: synaeresis: 24% (6); syncope: 64% (16). Figured against respective totals of trisyllabic feet as a whole. I of course do not mean to imply that syncope was rare in eighteenth-century verse, but simply that synaeresis was on the whole (though perhaps less in Pope) more common.

<sup>42</sup> (103).

variably given to the close of the second foot—that is to say, after the fourth syllable. The reason for this position was simply that the pause, if any sort of balance of line-halves was to be maintained, should be near the center—after the fourth, fifth, or sixth syllables; that since the iambic measure necessitated, by its very definition, conclusion in each foot on a strong syllable, the first half line should in general retain the nature of the measure and, like the end of the line itself, conclude on a strong syllable—after the close, that is, of a foot; and that the pause, as a rule, should consequently be a *masculine* cæsure, and come most often after the fourth or sixth syllable (that is to say, immediately after the second or third foot). There would seem to have been some belief that if the pause came too often after the sixth syllable, the line might be considered top-heavy; that after the first three feet, the last two would appear rather anti-climactic.

Prosodists such as Gascoigne<sup>43</sup> and Puttenham<sup>44</sup> therefore, stated that the basic cæsure for the iambic pentameter line was the second-foot, or post-fourth-syllable pause. Their advocacy was simply one of what was consistently practiced. In Elizabethan pentameter verse generally, the post-fourth-syllable pause appears in from about 35% to 70%<sup>45</sup> of the lines; the remaining pauses are scattered in other positions, with about 20% to 30% allotted to the sixth syllable, 15% to 25% to the fifth, and the remnant is found in small proportions after the second, third, seventh, and eighth syllables. More or less characteristic are the cæsural counts, found in the text of this study, of Spenser, William Browne, Fairfax, and Shakespeare's sonnets. It may be added that a far better metrical device for determining the chronology of Shakespeare's dramatic verse than such matters as run-on lines, feminine endings, amount of rhyme, and the like, is simply the extent to which he increasingly reduced the fourth syllable pause.

After the close of the Renaissance, however, the use of pause became increasingly refined, especially in prosodic theory, and indeed for Bysshe,<sup>46</sup> Bayly,<sup>47</sup> Webb,<sup>48</sup> Kames,<sup>49</sup> and all other Augustan prosodists it took rank with accent as a leading means, at once effective and legitimate, for variety. Pope, whose "variety" of pause Kames

<sup>43</sup> "Certayne Notes of Instruction Concerning the Making of Verse," *Works* (ed. Cunliffe, Cambridge, 1907-10), I, 471.

<sup>44</sup> *Arte of English Poesie* (edd. Willcock and Walker, Cambridge, 1936), p. 72.

<sup>45</sup> Characteristic of non-dramatic blank verse is Surrey's *Aeneid*, with 53%, and Gascoigne's *Steele Glas*, with 62%. It should be added that the proportion in dramatic blank verse, especially after about 1590, is considerably less.

<sup>46</sup> *Art of Poetry* (1710), p. 3.

<sup>47</sup> *Music, Poetry, and Oratory*, p. 106.

<sup>48</sup> *Remarks on the Beauties of Poetry* (ed. Hecht, Hamburg, 1920), pp. 58-61.

<sup>49</sup> *Elements*, II, 421-35.

extolled as "not less perfect of its kind than that of Virgil,"<sup>50</sup> studied the potentialities of pause with the greatest care, although the rules set forth for it in the letter to Cromwell are no key to his use of it. Pope had written:

Every nice ear must (I believe) have observ'd, that in any English verse of ten syllables, there is naturally a Pause at the fourth, fifth, or sixth syllable. It is upon these that the ear rests, and upon the judicious change and management of which depends the variety of versification. For example,

At the fifth.

Where'er thy navy / spreads her canvas wings,

At the fourth.

Homage to thee / and peace to all she brings.

At the sixth.

Like tracts of leverets / in morning snow.

Now I fancy, that, to preserve an exact Harmony and Variety, the Pause at the 4th or 6th should not be continued above three lines together, without the interposition of another; else it will be apt to weary the ear with one continued tone, at least it does mine; that at the fifth runs quicker, and carries not quite so dead a weight, so tires not so much, tho' it be continued longer.<sup>51</sup>

And indeed the pause was "so essential to the melody, that a poet cannot be too nice"—to quote Kames—"in the choice of its place, in order to have it clear and distinct."<sup>52</sup>

Variety in the placing of the *cæsura* was consequently of extreme importance; and in like manner sameness in its position, more than any other single factor, was what was considered to produce monotony. Webb is explicit on this: "Monotony in the couplet does not proceed, as has been imagined, from the repetition of the rhymes, but from a sameness in the movement of the verse [from *cæsural* placing]."<sup>53</sup> Yet it was necessary, in the line of the couplet, to keep the *cæsura* close to the center; for only thus, because of the marked pause at the conclusion of the line, might be maintained a certain amount of that balance necessary if, to turn to Johnson, there be "change without breach of order."<sup>54</sup> Care should therefore be taken that the *cæsura*

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 411.

<sup>51</sup> Elwin-Courthope, VI, 57.

<sup>52</sup> *Elements*, II, 393.

<sup>53</sup> *Remarks*, ed. cited, p. 60.

<sup>54</sup> Since there was no specific end-pause in the more run-on lines of blank verse, Webb, at least, would consider *cæsural* restriction of this sort undesirable there; he would consequently condemn the movement of the blank verse of Addison's *Cato* as monotonous (*loc. cit.*).



be only between the third and seventh syllables. Johnson's contention is characteristic: "As harmony is the end of poetical measures, no part of a verse ought to be so separated from the rest as not to remain still more harmonious than prose, or to show, by the disposition of the tones, that it is a part of a verse"; and Johnson would consequently forbid all but the five middle pauses as "unharmonious," since "the order and regularity of accents cannot be well perceived in a succession of fewer than three syllables."<sup>55</sup> Newbery would likewise make the third and seventh syllables the limit;<sup>56</sup> Kames and Blair go even farther and draw the line at the fourth and seventh.<sup>57</sup>

The placing of the cæsure within these limits was not a matter of much dispute. It is true that Warton had commented on Pope's statement, "the Pause at the 4th or 6th should not be continued above three lines together," that this was "a rule he himself did not always observe; for he continued the pause at the fourth syllable, sometimes, through six verses together";<sup>58</sup> and that even the tolerant Webb thought Pope had overused post-fourth-syllable pausing.<sup>59</sup> But they were exceptional. The fourth-syllable cæsure still had its devotees. Kames, who praised Pope's variety of pause,<sup>60</sup> considered the *Rape of the Lock*, 57.7% of the lines of which have the cæsure immediately after the fourth syllable, "in point of versification, the most complete performance in the English language."<sup>61</sup> John Mason, again, maintained that the pause should be regularly after the fourth syllable, with variations proceeding thence; and even Gray went no further than to attack Puttenham's contention that the cæsure should always be thus placed.<sup>62</sup> And Johnson thought additional emphasis could be secured by post-fourth or post-sixth-syllable pausing, when the cæsure is strong and terminates an integrated phrase: for if the pause comes after a "weak syllable" (e.g., the third or fifth),

the period leaves the ear unsatisfied, and in expectation of the remaining part of a verse. . . . It may be, I think, established as a rule, that a pause which concludes a period should be made for the most part upon a strong syllable, as the fourth or sixth; but those pauses which only suspend the sense may be placed

<sup>55</sup> *Rambler*, No. 90.

<sup>56</sup> *Art of Poetry*, I, 11.

<sup>57</sup> *Elements of Criticism*, II, 388; *Lectures*, III, 106.

<sup>58</sup> *Works*, ed. cited, VI, 57n.

<sup>59</sup> *Remarks*, p. 57. Weston, as might be expected, thought Pope's use of pause completely lacking in variety (*Essay*, p. xii; but see the mention of Weston in Appendix D, above, p. 196).

<sup>60</sup> *Elements*, II, 411.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 362.

<sup>62</sup> "Observations on English Metre," *Works* (ed. Gosse, 1884), I, 333-334.

upon the weaker. . . . The noblest and most majestick pauses which our versification admits, are upon the fourth and sixth syllables, which are both strongly sounded in a pure and regular verse, and at either of which the line so divided, that both members participate of harmony.<sup>63</sup>

Yet it would seem that the post-fourth-syllable cæsure was commended less by the Augustans because of strong traditional sanction or the securing of emphasis by pausing after a strong syllable than it was because of its remarkable potentiality as a means of obtaining speed. As the perspicacious Webb remarked, "When the pause falls on the fourth syllable, we shall find that we pronounce the six last in the same time as we do the four first."<sup>64</sup> And it was simply because a more apparent rapidity is effected when the cæsure is in the first half rather than in the second half of the line, that many of the Augustan coupleteers, whose aim was so often joint rapidity and line-integrity, strove consciously to place the cæsure mainly in the first half line; and Bysshe's emphasis upon it<sup>65</sup> was only a formal affirmation of what had long been practised. Since the post-second and third-syllable pause were too far from the center to give the line any genuine balance,<sup>66</sup> and since it was likewise masculine (after a strong syllable), the post-fourth-syllable cæsure became the preferred one where speed of movement was the end; and even as the century progressed, Kames<sup>67</sup> and later Blair<sup>68</sup> insisted that fourth-syllable pausing had by far the greatest effect of liveliness and rapidity. There is strong reason for suspecting that the potentialities for speed inherent in placing the cæsure in this position were by no means unapparent to Pope, who, more even than Dryden before him, combined it with initial accentual inversion in order to gain even greater speed:

Her lively looks (x) a sprightly mind disclose,  
Quick as her eyes, (x) and as unfixed as those:  
Favours to none, (x) to all she smiles extends;  
Oft she rejects, (x) but never once offends.  
Bright as the sun, (x) her eyes the gazers strike,  
And, like the sun, (x) they shine on all alike

(*R. of L.*, II, 9-14).

<sup>63</sup> *Rambler*, No. 90.

<sup>64</sup> *Remarks on the Beauties of Poetry*, p. 58.

<sup>65</sup> *Art of English Poetry* (1710), pp. 3-4.

<sup>66</sup> See, again, Newbery (*Art of Poetry*, I, 11), who likewise disapproves of cæsural placing after the seventh and eighth syllables for the same reason.

<sup>67</sup> *Elements of Criticism*, II, 425.

<sup>68</sup> *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles-Lettres*, edition cited, III, 107.

In the second canto, indeed, of the *Rape of the Lock*, a total of 23.9% of the lines possess both the cæsura after the second foot and initial inversion.<sup>69</sup>

The fourth-syllable cæsura was the most common Augustan pause therefore, both because of previous traditional sanction and because of its potentiality for rapidity. It is towards this pause that Keats, after he broke from the cæsural placing of Hunt, increasingly worked; and in *Lamia* he used it with great frequency. The pause in the center, that is after the fifth syllable, though, to quote Kames, less "sprightly . . . because a short syllable intervenes between it [the fourth syllable] and the pause,"<sup>70</sup> and much less used by the Augustans, had yet the advantage, as Pope noted in the letter to Cromwell, of admitting frequent use, if such use were deemed advisable. The reason, as Walter Young later pointed out, was probably that, since the latter half of the line becomes a perfect trochaic trimeter without the concluding light syllable, while the first half constitutes an iambic dimeter, a continual combination of balance and variety was obtained.<sup>71</sup>

No powers of body (x) or of soul to share

But what his Nature (x) and his state can bear

(*Essay on Man*, I, 191-2).

The primary reason why its use among the Augustans—as among the Elizabethans—was not excessive, varying from about 15% to 25%, was that it was feminine, or after a weak syllable. This is the most frequent pause in the sonnets and couplets of Hunt, and in the early sonnets and couplets of Keats. Hunt and Keats, because of the marked extent of this preference, are rather unique in English cæsural placing. After *Endymion*, Keats radically reduced pauses in this position. He returned to it in the blank verse of the revised *Fall of Hyperion*.

The sixth-syllable cæsura, to turn again to Kames,—and Kames is but reiterating a statement common in Augustan prosodists—has about it an "air of gravity and solemnity,"<sup>72</sup> and for this reason it was above all others the favorite pause of Johnson:<sup>73</sup>

<sup>69</sup> Dryden had been fond of the combination, and from him Keats took it over in *Lamia*. Yet their totals (*Abs. and Ach.*, 1-204: 10.3% and *Lamia*, 1-170: 7.7%), high though they be, appear small when set against that of Pope.

<sup>70</sup> *Elements of Criticism*, II, 425-426; cf. Blair, *Lectures*, III, 107.

<sup>71</sup> "On Rhythmical Measures," *Royal Society of Edinburgh, Transactions*, II (1790), 79-80.

<sup>72</sup> *Elements of Criticism*, II, 426; cf., for example, Blair, *Lectures*, III, 107-108.

<sup>73</sup> *Rambler*, No. 90.

Thus at her felt approach, (x) and secret night  
(*Dunciad*, IV, 639);

Nor human spark is left, (x) nor glimpse divine  
(*Ibid.*, IV, 652).

Such a pause had the simultaneous advantage of being masculine—after a strong syllable, that is,—and near the center of the line. It is noteworthy that the only major English pentameter writer who shows consistent preference for it is Milton, who sought a majestic and dignified line; and that, of all the Miltonic blank verse of both the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, *Hyperion* alone shows the same preference.

As, in post-sixth-syllable pausing, "the second portion [of the line] being pronounced with less effort than the first, the diminished effort prepares the mind for rest," so "this preparation for rest is still more sensibly felt where the pause is after the seventh syllable,"<sup>74</sup> as in

And all its varying rainbows (x) die away  
(*Dunc.*, IV, 632);

And universal darkness (x) buries all  
(*Ibid.*, IV, 686).

But this seventh-syllable pausing had the disadvantage of being both feminine—after a weak syllable, that is—and relatively far from the center of the line; and excessive use of it was consequently believed to lead to languor and formlessness of line. As a rule, in Augustan verse, not more than 3% to 5% of the lines had this pause. In Keats's early sonnets and couplets, like the pentameter verse of Hunt, from 11% to 13% of the lines employ this pause; they were increasingly reduced, with almost chronological regularity, to about 5% in *Lamia*.

It may be added that in romantic and Victorian pentameter verse generally there is an increasing variety of caesural placing; but that, as a rule, the order of preference for position was still, respectively, the 4th, 6th, 5th, 7th, 3rd, 2nd and 8th syllables.

<sup>74</sup> Kames, *Elements*, II, 425; cf. Blair's *Lectures*, III, 108.

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